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As always, we welcome your thoughts and comments regarding this journal. If you are or once were a Georgetown University student, professor or staff member we would welcome the opportunity to review your work for publication in *Utraque Unum*. In addition to writers, we are looking for section editors, artists, graphic designers and web designers. Please e-mail the editors at utraque.unum@gmail.com for these inquiries.
Tocqueville Forum
ON THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Cultivating Knowledge of America and the West

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Dear Reader,

As ever, we thank you for taking part in the intellectual discussion that this newest issue of *Utraque Unum* embodies. As we enter now our fifth year of publication, we reflect on what it means to undertake serious liberal education and commit ourselves with renewed vigor to the ideals that gave rise to the Tocqueville Forum and to this journal now over half a decade ago.

Recently, Georgetown launched one of its more ambitious capital campaigns, seeking to “secure Georgetown for generations to come.” With much fanfare, colored lights, and cocktail parties, the college pronounced itself ready to take on the future. The question inevitably arises, though, of what precisely we are securing for posterity. If recent history is any guide, the school is providing new business buildings, science programs, student lounges, and funding for faculty research. Absent is any meaningful talk about shoring up the core curriculum that is the bedrock of undergraduate education or seriously examining the mission of the institution.

Happily, there still exist pockets of traditional thought with fidelity to the old ideals of undergraduate teaching of great books and great thinkers. Yet I wonder, sometimes, whether or not our present age can sustain dedicated study of the past, which has shaped and informed and indeed yielded the present. George Santayana said famously that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it, but a singular trait of the modern man is his unfailing belief in his ability to conquer the world. History, he argues, is by definition antiquated, and there is a certain hubris that tells him he needs not the markers of history to guide his way forward. Too often we fail to remember that society, as Burke most eloquently put it, “is a partnership between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born,” such that each element is a “clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place.”

Lest we also forget, the “invisible world” is linked permanently to the material, but it fundamentally transcends it. The Latin *utraque unum* of course encapsulates both faith and reason, the twin pillars that sustain scholarship and human existence. It encourages introspection and humility, both of which derive from a recognition of those higher and lower natures that are ordered hierarchically and properly from the divine source. Armed with this knowledge, man proceeds humbly, for he knows his place in the cosmic order. However, instead of meaningful contemplation—knowing ourselves—the academy often looks outwards, erecting grand structures dedicated to science and commerce but forgetting what underlying end those disciplines serve.

I recall Dr. Johnson writing in *Rasselas* of a voyage to the Egyptian pyramids. The philosopher Im- lac says, “I consider this mighty structure as a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments. A king whose power is unlimited, and whose treasures surmount all real and imaginary wants, is compelled to solace, by the erection of a pyramid, the satiety of dominion and tastelessness of pleasures, and to amuse the tediousness of declining life by seeing thousands laboring without end, and one stone, for no purpose, laid upon another. Whoever thou art that, not content with a moderate condition, imaginest happiness in royal magnificence, and dreamest that command or riches can feed the appetite of novelty with perpetual gratifications, survey the Pyramids, and confess thy folly!” This little passage contains precise rays of truth, for the magnificent dreams of modernity, shorn of an understanding of the teleological ends of human life and that particular virtue of moderation best described by Aristotle, fall away into emptiness. The notion of “declining life” cannot be
combated by something as crude as materialism or cheap pleasure; it requires sustained effort and hard work to catch even a glimmer of the good.

Perhaps fundamentally, the mission of the university is to help students through this darkness to find the light, as invisible indeed as it may seem at first. The mind, in the end, will irradiate, and we will wade through the fen of stagnant waters that wash over much of contemporary culture. I take great comfort when I see the excellent work done by undergraduates despite all odds, and the essays in the following pages validate the belief that arts and letters cannot be totally eradicated while they yet live in the minds of students. So we close with a prayer: *Dum spiro, spero.*

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Stephen Wu  
*Editor-in-Chief*
Generations

The Tocqueville Forum’s student journal, *Utraque Unum*, was launched in Fall 2007. Its realization was the result of conversations between me and then-junior Eric Wind, who became its first general editor. Eric not only shepherded the journal during its first two years, but largely created its format, sections and ongoing themes. Eric ceded leadership to one of his section editors, Scott Gray, and subsequently Collan Rosier, who, after successfully bringing forth several issues, handed over the reins to Stephen Wu. Stephen, who is presently abroad, now leaves the day-to-day management of the journal to the leadership of Chris Mooney.

This is the reality with a student-led publication: necessarily, there is frequent turn-over in leadership, as students ascend to top positions often in the latter part of their studies, meaning that they will only be able to serve for one or two years before moving beyond the Hilltop.

Few entities could survive this kind of frequent turnover; for instance, a company whose CEO was replaced every several years would find its stock price reflecting fears about instability and lack of continuity. Yet, if anything, the quality of *Utraque Unum* has continually improved over the years – mainly due to rising interest among the general student body who seek to write for a publication that has established a reputation for quality and intellectual depth. That ongoing growth and increased visibility is a reflection of the steady and continuous excellence among the leaders of the journal – its general and section editors.

I think the ongoing success of the journal is not only the result of the sustained excellence of its leadership, but the keen awareness of the brevity of their office, and a strong commitment to cultivation of subsequent leaders. This awareness and activity, in a microcosm, is the defining feature of a culture: a keen devotion to the cultivation of subsequent generations, whether measured in a few brief years or a few brief lifetimes.

Alexis de Tocqueville – the namesake of our organization – feared that citizens of a democracy would demonstrate a tendency toward short-term thinking, and, in particular, would come to neglect and even forget their bond to past and future generations. While he did not perhaps foresee in every detail a society willing to assume debt that would burden several unborn generations, he understood the dynamic that would spur democratic citizens to be creatures of a day, concerned only with their own lifespans and prone not to assume gratitude for inheritance of the past and obligation for the future.

The journal you hold is a small demonstration of one of the main commitments of the Tocqueville Forum – our belief that democratic societies can only flourish when there is a strong bond between generations. The journal reflects a culture of responsibility of one classmate to another, of seniors to freshmen, of current Hoyas to Hoyas to come. It is a physical manifestation of a philosophic and theological vision that animates the students who have sought out membership in a program devoted to “educating democracy,” of fostering a culture of responsibility and stewardship. While its readers, we hope, will enjoy the many fruits within its pages, it is the ongoing publication of the journal itself that represents the richest harvest.

Patrick J. Deneen is a professor in the Georgetown University Department of Government and founding director of the Tocqueville Forum on the Roots of American Democracy.
On What Can be Purchased for a Drachma

“My dear Meletus, do you think you are prosecuting Anaxagoras? Are you so contemptuous of the jury and think them so ignorant of letters as not to know that the books of Anaxagoras of Clazomenae are full of those theories (that the Sun is a rock), and further, that the young men learn from me what they can buy from time to time for a drachma, at most, in the bookshops, and ridicule Socrates, if he pretends that these theories are his own, especially as they are so absurd?”

—Plato, The Apology, 26d

“You may say, if you like, that a man is free to think himself a poached egg. But it is surely a more massive and important fact that if he is a poached egg, he is not free to eat, drink, sleep, walk, or smoke a cigarette. Similarly you may say, if you like, that the bold determinist speculator is free to disbelieve in the reality of the will. But it is a much more massive and important fact that he is not free to raise, to curse, to think, to justify, to urge, to punish, to resist temptation, to incite mobs, to make New Year’s resolutions, to pardon sinners, to rebuke tyrants, or even to say ‘thank you’ for the mustard.”

—G. K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy.

James V. Schall, S.J.

Before the end of Spring term, a student asked me if I would join a series called “Last Lectures” that graduating seniors provide for their last days in college. So I prepared this “Last Lecture” only to be later informed that, in the end, no classroom could be found for mine! Well, here it is anyhow. The custom during graduation week of inviting sundry professors to present one “Last Lecture,” open to anyone who wants to hear someone he missed during the four college years or who wants to hear again some final words before going off into the wild blue yonder, is a good one, I think. Any professor who has spent time in a university will have things to reflect on that he never managed to present in class, things of importance, things of nostalgia, things of humor, things, he hopes, of wisdom.

Hundreds and hundreds of courses in bewildering variety are listed during one’s college years. To choose a “major” is usually, in true Hegelian fashion, to reject thinking of many other things worth considering and knowing. We cannot help but wonder about the things we missed. Specialization, as Plato said, is necessary that all things come forth in the whole. Yet, a “liberal education” attends to the whole, to the principle that some things are more worth knowing than others, even though all things that are turn out to be worth knowing as best we can.

Sometimes, I confess that I have nightmares at the thought of students graduating from col-
On What Can Be Purchased for a Drachma

In the Apology, Socrates tells us that any young man, for a mere drachma, could purchase an inexpensive book by Anaxagoras. He explained the then dubious view that the Sun or the Moon is but a rock. Though he too as a young man was interested in the stars, Socrates could hardly be accused of having an original or even blasphemous opinion on cosmic subjects when the local booksellers carry items of other authors that propose such a thing.

Moreover, Socrates implies that this very unpleasant young man, Meletos, the poet who prosecuted him for atheism and for corrupting the youth at the trial, had a low estimate of the intelligence of ordinary Athenian citizens. They knew perfectly well what is sold in the local bookshops. Actually, the most remarkable book that I read this past year is on this same subject of the order of the universe. For a few drachmas, you can buy Robert Spitzer’s New Cosmological Proofs for the Existence of God, but that is being up-to-date!

II.

In this vein, I thought as a “Last Lecture” to say something about Plato, Samuel Johnson, and Chesterton, in case you missed them in your now ending college days. In retrospect, they sometimes seem to be spelled, not d-a-y-s, but d-a-z-e. I may even wonder why you missed reading Benedict XVI, one of the greatest minds, or even the philosopher king, Charles Schulz, who brought a new way of looking at our human lot. Looking back, in the words of the famous Yale Whiffenpoof Song, we wonder whether we too are “poor little lambs who have lost our way.” We sometimes ought to wonder whether we “gentlemen songsters” too are “doomed from here to eternity.” The meaning of song, gentlemen, and doom are apt subjects for college reflection.

Did we give eternity a thought during these four years? Benedict writes brilliantly on this
topic in his *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*. Leo Strauss concluded his famous essay, “What Is Political Philosophy?” with these memorable words: “For oblivion of eternity, or, in other words, estrangement from man’s deepest desire and therewith from the primary issues is the price which modern man had to pay, from the very beginning, for attempting to be absolutely sovereign, to become the master and owner of nature, to conquer chance.”

On completing college, are we too “estranged from man’s deepest desire?” Do we think we are the “master and owner” of nature? Like Machiavelli, do we want to “conquer chance” or think that it should be conquered?

But if you did read these writers, it will be even better to think of them again. I often quote C. S. Lewis’ famous remark that if we have only read “a great book once, we have not read it at all.” What Chesterton said about “The Suicide of Thought,” as he entitled his third chapter of *Orthodoxy*, and what Socrates said about the philosopher’s knowledge are quite pertinent to us.

I have already mentioned Chesterton’s list of the things that a man who thinks that he is a “poached egg” cannot do. Poached eggs cannot logically smoke cigarettes. This list prepares us for the further list of things that a man who denies free will, who maintains the world is determined, cannot do either, things like overturning tyrants, forgiving sins, making New Year’s resolutions, and saying “thank you” to someone for passing the mustard.

III. At the end of Book Five of the Republic, Socrates brings up the question of what the newly discovered philosopher-king should know. Even more, what kind of a soul does he manifest? We manifest our souls when we act and when we speak, even when we laugh and cry. We reveal ourselves to those who know how to read the human soul, usually by their first knowing themselves. Philosophers, Socrates tells us, are “lovers of the sight of truth” (475d). Between those who love the truth and those who do not, we find a deep chasm.

Indeed, we can compare lovers of sight and hearing with lovers of truth. The first group loves sight and arts; the second loves arguments. They love making things clear. “The lovers of hearing and the lovers of sights...surely delight in fair sounds and colors and shapes and all that craft makes from such things, but their thought is unable to see and delight in the nature of the fair itself,” Socrates tells Glaucon. Do the good and the beautiful, striking as they are, explain themselves?

Already here we have hints that things themselves betray more than themselves. Things are given to us in order that we might rise to a full knowledge of them. No finite thing fully explains itself, even to itself. Nor are things complete until someone knows them. Nothing is so tiny or insignificant or huge and expansive that it does not reveal something of being and wonder at its source. The lovers of sight, of course, first need to see, see what is there.

The scene I want next to talk about opens with Linus wearing a new pair of eye-glasses. He is talking to Lucy. “And so,” he explains to her that “the ophthalmologist said I have to start to wear glasses.” He then turns his back to Lucy, and continues with some frankness, “At first, I was pretty upset. It was a real emotional blow. All sorts of things went through my mind.” Next, with a certain perkiness, Linus continues, “But finally one thought seems to stand out.” Lucy naturally asks, “What was that?” To a placid Lucy, he responds, “It’s kind of nice to be able to see what’s going on” (Schulz, Peanuts Treasury, 2005). That is indeed where we begin, in our senses, with what’s already going on. We come into a world in which things are already going on.

But we cannot just stop there. Socrates proceeds: “Is the man who holds that there are fair things but doesn’t hold that there is beauty itself and who, if someone leads him to the knowledge of it, isn’t able to follow—is he, in your opinion, living in a dream or is he awake?” (476b). It may be that we do not want to know everything we should know. We choose to confuse dreams and
reality. We have lies in our souls about what is, as Plato also stated.

Socrates said in his Apology that, like a gadfly; he went about the city keeping people awake lest they doze off, fail to examine themselves, and miss the important things. A prosperous city lacking reference to the highest things is a terrible place in which to live. Socrates does not deny that particular fair things really exist and are really fair. Yet, he speaks of someone leading us to a knowledge of beauty itself. But we may be unable or unwilling to see it. “What if the man of whom we say that he opines but doesn’t know gets harsh with us and disputes the truth of what we say?” We find ourselves locked in argument with him.

We tell such a man that we are delighted to see that he knows something. We can begin questioning with this fact. “Does the man who knows, know something or nothing?” Socrates asks Glaucon to answer in the man’s name. Socrates wants to show the man whence what he already knows leads him, if followed out to its conclusion. Glaucon responds that “He knows something.” “Is it something that is or is not?” This is the key question, the existential question. Is it or is it not? Logically, Glaucon answers, “How could what is not be known at all?” What is, is knowable, what is not, is not.

Socrates affirms that “knowledge naturally depends on what is, to know of what is, that it is and how it is” (476b). The first act of philosophy is the effort to make distinctions. It is, as Msgr. Sokolowski remarks, primarily a contemplative act. We need to know what is before we know what to do. We delight in seeing that this thing is not that thing. We identify what each thing is, what it is not. Socrates tells us: “Knowledge is presumably dependent on what is, to know of what is that it is and how it is” (478a).

Opinion does not yet know what a thing is or for sure that it is. Opinion knows that it does not know everything. “That which is not could not with any correctness be addressed as some one thing but rather as nothing at all…. Opinion opines neither that which is nor that which is not” (479c). Opinion has not yet made a definite conclusion about being.

IV. Socrates remains concerned with “the good man who doesn’t believe that there is anything fair in itself and an idea of the beautiful itself, which always stays the same in all respects, but (he) does hold that there are many fair things, the lover of sights who can in no way endure it if anyone asserts the fair is one and the just is one and so on with the rest” (479a). The man has not yet arisen to the highest things. He has not yet “turned around.” He cannot “endure” the thought that he is not yet a philosopher. He cannot grasp why not. “It is not lawful to be harsh on what is true. Must we therefore call philosophers rather than lovers of opinion those who delight in each thing that is in itself” (480b). Philosophers delight in each thing that is. But this is only the beginning of their wonderment.

Socrates next tells us that “philosophical natures...are always in love with learning which discloses to them something of the being that is always and does not wander about, driven by generation and decay” (485b). Learning discloses to us something of what is. Everything is not just generation and decay, ever changeable, though there are things that change. “The man who is really a lover of learning must from youth on strive as intensely as possible for every kind of truth” (485b). So the love of learning includes a striving to know. We are unsettled at not knowing and knowing that we do not know. It implies a self-discipline. It implies a teacher who also strives from youth.

But are not the important things to know the human things, the mortal things, the things that Aristotle, at the end of the Ethics, warned us about spending our lives pursuing exclusively? (1177b26-78a4). Human things have their place. Yet, once we put them into place, is that all there is? “To an understanding endowed with magnificence and contemplation of all time and all being, do you think it possible that human life seems anything great?” (486a). Human affairs
are unserious in comparison to what is really serious. As Plato would say in his Laws, it is God that is important for us; in comparison human life does not seem so great (803c).

“So then, won’t we make a sensible apology in saying that it is the nature of the real lover of learning to strive for what is,” Socrates says, “and he does not tarry by each of the many things opined to be but goes forward and does not lose the keenness of his passionate love nor cease from it before he grasps the nature itself of each thing which is with the part of his soul fit to grasp a thing of that sort; and it is the part akin to it that is fit. And once near it and coupled with what really is, having begotten intelligence and truth, he knows and lives truly…” (490a-b).

He knows and lives truly when he has pursued and found the truth of things.

Socrates never thought that the worst crimes and disorders came from the least intelligent or capable. Rather they were rooted in the best minds that have gone wrong. “Or do you suppose an ordinary nature is the source of great injustices and unmixed villainy?” (491e). Rather, “it’s the philosopher, keeping company with the divine and the orderly who becomes orderly and divine, to the extent that is possible for a human being” (500e). For the philosophers, it is not usually a question of not knowing what is wrong with their own souls, but of not wanting to know. These are the dangerous ones.

Charlie Brown has a very down look on his face. They are outside. Lucy says perkily: “You know what the whole trouble with you is, Charlie Brown?” Charlie in the next scene, looking Lucy right in the eye, defiantly replies, “No, and I don’t want to know. Leave me alone.” In the third scene, in silence, Charlie turns and walks away. Finally when he gets a little distance, Lucy shouts at him, “The whole trouble with you is that you won’t listen to what is the whole trouble with you” (Peanuts Treasury). And we often choose not to listen. This is why education is never just education about the facts, but a discipline and a habit of virtue. Things can come crashing into our world. This is the best part of our existence, I think. But when they do, we have to be ready to listen and to receive them.

V. Hester Thrale, in her Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, remarked of him that “No man ever conversed so well as he on every subject; no man so acutely discerned the reason of every fact, the motive of every action, the end of every design. He was indeed often pained by the ignorance or causeless wonder of those who knew less than himself, though he seldom drove them away with apparent scorn, unless they added presumption to stupidity….” The highest things exist in conversation. The act of friendship, Aristotle tells us, is the exchange of conversation about the highest things, the things that are.

For a professor and a priest, no more riveting moment exists than in those classes in which he reads together with his students the classic tractates on friendship. If there is any longing in the heart of the young, it is this seeking of someone with whom truly to converse about the highest things. That longing may indeed be the very definition of our human nature, the perfection of our social being in act, as Aristotle says.

And yet, we do not talk just to talk or converse just to converse. No doubt we do sometimes chat, and kid one another, and speak lightheartedly of things about us, even of our faults and sins. If we did not so act, we are hardly human. The unseriousness of our lives is itself ordered to the freedom to seek the highest things. But there are truths that ground the whole possibility of our being what we are intended to be. To deny them is the “suicide of thought.” We are given intelligence in order that we might know one another, know things, know what they are. Only then, when we know things and name them by their proper names can we proceed. If we get it wrong, the consequences can be dire.

“A sentence phrased wrong about the nature of symbolism would have broken all the best statues in Europe,” Chesterton remarked. “A slip in the definition might stop all the dances; might wither all the Christmas trees or break all the...”
Easter eggs. Doctrine had to be defined within strict limits even in order that man might enjoy general human liberties. The Church had to be careful, if only that the world might be careless.”

The need for dogma, for the statement of what is true, arises precisely here.

“Certain modern dreamers say that ants and bees have a society superior to ours. They have, indeed, a civilization; but that very truth only reminds us that it is an inferior civilization. Whoever found an ant-hill decorated with the statues of celebrated ants? Who has seen a bee-hive carved with the images of gorgeous queens of old? No; the chasm between man and other creatures may have a natural explanation, but is a chasm. We talk of wild animals, but man is the only wild animal. It is man that has broken out.”

So this is where I want to leave graduating students, with the wonder of why the bees never built a statue to the most gorgeous Queen Bee of history? When we leave these walls that should have surrounded us, but did not, we wonder about all that we know and do not know. It is a worthy wonder. And yet, it is not a skepticism. It is only a tribute to the vastness of what is, the very object of the metaphysics that we probably did not study, but would have loved had we done so.

James V. Schall, S.J. is a professor in the Georgetown University Department of Government.
Bertrand de Jouvenel once described social contract theory as “the view of childless men who seem to have forgotten their childhood,” presumably in reference to the usual suspects: John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. The central tenet of liberal theory, Jouvenel proffers, is based upon a rather conspicuous anthropological flaw. The state of nature in all its horrid glory, the clashing of autonomous, thumotic individuals, never really existed. On the contrary, man enters the world utterly dependent. Even after the social contract has been drawn, Jouvenel’s quote suggests that liberalism fundamentally underestimates man’s innate self-insufficiencies. If Lockean liberalism made substantial philosophical gains for personal freedom, it is uneasy at best with the effort to be free from the constraints of the self.

From a contemporary perspective, the reality of the individual self seems obvious, its need for protection intuitive. As Wilson Carey McWilliams writes, “My body reminds me constantly that I am separate; my senses are my own and no one else’s.” Self-ownership appears to be a nearly biological, even ontological fact; as such, it justifies and fuels the Madisonian system and is tied to the prevailing conception of American liberty. The thoroughly liberal self may thus wonder why anyone would ever want to be free from himself, never mind abridged of his all-important self-interest. In this sense, individualism is an ideology, one coincident with the values of a liberal democracy.

Tocqueville, of course, rendered this very insight in his prescient second volume of *Democracy in America*: “Individualism,” he said, “is a recent expression arising from a new idea. Our fathers knew only selfishness.” To extrapolate, if the individual is viewed as a profoundly relational being whose identity is made by the particular circumstances of his life – chosen or not – then self-centeredness is pejorative, demonstrating a defect in man’s understanding of himself. But if the individual is instead thought to be a discrete, self-owning, rational whole, then self-centeredness – or individualism – is at the very basis of our existence. This means our relationships are not fundamental to who we are, but rather, are contingent upon our consent to them. Aristocratic relationships are characterized by duty, romantic ones by love, and liberal ones by consent. In fact, when love is characteristic of interpersonal relationships today, it too is understood to be profoundly subject to Lockean consent and self-ownership.

But love, if anything, involves being partially owned by a beloved; it admits (and hopefully welcomes) the possibility that one’s fate is bound to the fate of another. It is my claim that in conceiving the self through the liberal lens of individualistic self-ownership, the experience of love is effectively weakened.

In lieu of attempting to define love as a historical, philosophical, or psycho-emotional concept, which would be a rather daunting endeavor for one morning, I accept C.S. Lewis’ def-
inition of love from his concise treatise entitled The Four Loves. Originally intended as the first chapter of a larger work that addresses each of the four loves in turn, the scope of this paper extends only to the first of the four ideal types: affection. Tocqueville’s analysis is particularly relevant to affectionate love within the political community, especially as related to individualism. He tells us that individualism was combated through the unique New England townships, the abundance of free associations, and the primacy of the family unit in 19th century America. These elements of life draw man outside of himself and, in Tocqueville’s analysis, inculcate civic virtues that preserve democratic liberty. It is my contention that within these spheres the democratic individual also comes to see his identity as constituted by those around him, those for whom he has affectionate love. In doing so he combats individualism, per Tocqueville, but also he develops a capacity for self-relinquishing that is anathema to the liberal creed. My paper turns to the transformation of small communities, free associations, and the family, to substantiate the claim that affectionate love is challenged as individualism increasingly prevails in American life.

Before proceeding to the political aspect of my argument, it is necessary to characterize affection with some degree of specificity. Storge, or affection, is a love that develops over time. Often a filial love, affection is not confined to members of the same the family. Lewis says “it can exist between a clever young man from the university and an old nurse, though their minds inhabit different worlds.” It is usually impossible to identify a discrete moment at which this love begins, with the possible exception of the immediate affection that usually exists between parents and children. Unlike either friendship or romantic love, affection does not originate from appreciation or admiration of the beloved, though it may eventually engender that. Lewis says affection is “the least discriminating of loves,” a love that is not contingent upon preference, but instead depends upon mere familiarity.  

Often, Lewis says, we would not have chosen the object of our affection had we been given the choice. “The especial glory of Affection,” he writes, “is that it can unite those who most emphatically, even comically, are not [made for each other]; people who, if they had not found themselves put down by fate in the same household or community, would have had nothing to do with each other.” Affection loves without regard to merit and persists through disappointment. It is humble and homely and suffers from being constantly extolled. Rather than an affront on the beloved, the understanding that he or she is loved without regard to personal merit due to the stability of affection, allows for a unique freedom. The affectionate can be uncommonly honest and chastise without lasting damage; a long history of affectionate love promises its own continuance, even after a confrontation or disappointment. Where there is affection between lovers, there can be quiet moments in which there is, as Lewis puts it, “no need to talk. No need to make love. No needs at all except perhaps to stir the fire.”

Because affection is the least discriminating love, meaning the least based on explicit choice of the other, the arbitrary family or locality one is born into is fertile ground upon which affection can thrive. Affection develops in both family life and connectedness with the wider community. What Lewis describes as “the amazing heterogeneity possible between those who are bound by Affection” can only be experienced if people actually participate in close and continuous relationships with others who are different from themselves – different with regard to age, personality, wealth, skill, and so on. And so we turn to some of the earliest settlers of America, perhaps an unexpected example of both diversity and love: the Puritans.

When John Winthrop told the passengers on the Arabella, “We shall be as a city upon a hill,” he spoke of a community whose cooperation for the common good would make them an exemplar to the rest of the world. Ordained by God, some men in the community would be rich, others poor; some skilled and some less so; “some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in submission.” Rather than causing divisiveness, however, this heterogeneity would
show the members of the community “that every man might have need of others, and from hence they might be all knit more nearly together in the bonds of brotherly affection.” Their devotion to the commonweal would outweigh their individual differences, allowing their community to flourish. In this speech, Winthrop was exhorting the settlers of the nascent Massachusetts Bay Colony to conceive of their colonial community as an extended family and, furthermore, to afford one another the affectionate love that would ensure their collective survival in the New World.

Two centuries after Winthrop’s now famous speech, when Alexis de Tocqueville traveled through the United States, he found the arguable successor to Winthrop’s tight-knit community in the New England township. The township was where Americans became politically socialized, a process inseparable from the development of affection for both one’s neighbors and his community as a whole. Through politics, the democrat encountered liberty – the desideratum of democracy – in his day-to-day life, paradoxically within the geographical, social, and political limits of his township on the Atlantic. This liberty was grounded not in his release from the community but within the intimate communal integrity of the township.

Perhaps in contrast to Winthrop’s Puritan community, the New England townships were remarkably egalitarian. Direct democracy operated on the premise that each man would be able to participate in governance. That some men would be perpetually “mean and in submission,” as Winthrop had described, was antithetical to the democratic ethos of the day. But the communities that Tocqueville observed, as in Winthrop’s time (and today, for that matter), were not absolutely egalitarian with regard to levels of wealth, education, property, or power. The difference between equality in these two communities lies in the normative implications of equality for the individual. In Winthrop’s Puritan tradition, all people were conceived of as radically equal before God, if not politically or materially equal. Writing in the 1630s, Winthrop saw disparities among the conditions of men as having the potential to “knit” his Puritan community together in a demonstration of their symbiosis and mutual identification. The rich could not exist even nominally without the poor. Inequality of conditions and even social status were not a function of either personal ingenuity or random injustice, but owed to the grace of God.

By the 1830s and 40s, Tocqueville observed that equality before the political community had undergone a kind of apotheosis. Enlightenment philosophy had increased the sacrosanct sphere of man’s inherent equality, once only thought possible in his relationship to God. Americans, Tocqueville observed, pursue equality more ardently than they do liberty. As democratic equality burgeoned in the townships, the threat of individualism lurked under the surface, waiting to challenge the storge that nurtured these interdependent, but increasingly egalitarian, communities. Because the progress of democratic equality eventually leads the democratic man “back toward himself alone and threatens finally to confine him wholly in the solitude of his own heart,” as Tocqueville tells us, the egalitarian ideal of direct democracy in the New England townships paradoxically contained the origins of love-impeding liberal individualism, even as these townships inhibited individualism by circumscribing autonomy. Meanwhile, this lifestyle facilitated the experience of interpersonal interaction and affection, which could be directed toward identifiable members of a literal human community.

Soon after Tocqueville’s visit, the enlargement of the American nation altered the desirability (and perhaps, feasibility) of remaining in the provincial township. By end of the nineteenth century, Tocqueville’s favored community was no longer the embodiment of American democracy, much less the epicenter of ideal American liberty. In 1893, only fifty years after the publication of the second volume of Democracy in the America, Frederick Jackson Turner claimed that the definitive American experience was westward expansion – and the individual freedom that went with it. As adventurous
young men went west and urban centers catered to rapidly improving technology and industrialization, small communities declined – their readily identifiable relationships and coherent, if possibly arcane, beliefs declining too.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the individual had emerged from the rigid and arbitrary confines of aristocracy, followed by the moral confines of the small community, to embrace the boundless possibilities for the courageous individual loose on the frontier. The primacy of the individual in the nineteenth century was unassailable, if not simply heroic; rugged Daniel Boone was the nearly Rousseauian ideal. Even those who did not brave the wilderness of the literal American frontier aspired to individuality. The truly democratic American was to be self-reliant, as the now canonical Ralph Waldo Emerson first declared in 1830. The vibrancy of the township in which individuals were interdependent was dimming as modernity gave rise to mobility. Historical, economic, and technological advances seemed to be yielding incessant victories for individual sovereignty while dismantling the spaces in which affection, a love that develops over time, could grow.

As technology and standards of living advanced, intimate interconnectivity between individuals in small communities dissipated; the individual appeared to be radically self-sustaining. To skip ahead in history, it is hard to imagine a greater symbol of ironic mass conformity to American individualism than the pinnacle of the American Dream in the mid twentieth century: Levittown, New York. The suburbanite lived in close quarters with his fellows but needed them for nothing. It was irrelevant whether the Mr. Smith next door was a tailor, baker, lawyer, or financier, for accessing those services was less a result of Affection-inducing proximity than of the cash nexus. The suburban man was free from many of the social entanglements that encumbered the economic liberty of his predecessors.

Ironically, the most extraordinary aspect of American society to Tocqueville was the abundance of social entanglements that demanded so much of American individuals: their free associations. Through these intermediary institutions, men formed the bonds that equality alone cannot provide, keeping creeping individualism at bay and civil decay with it. “The Americans have combated the individualism to which equality gives birth with freedom, and they have defeated it” through their engagement in civil society, Tocqueville declared. Free associations facilitated the formation of bonds outside of the nuclear family, creating opportunities for interpersonal interaction – requisite for affection – between democratic citizens. In one of his most famous passages about the good of associations, Tocqueville waxes: “Sentiments and ideas renew themselves, the heart is enlarged, and the human mind is developed only by the reciprocal action of men upon one another.” Civic associations revealed to the individual himself that he was a relational being, a political animal. Schools for civic virtue, free associations taught democrats the art of cooperation to sustain their government – and the virtue of self-abridgement to sustain their affectionate love.

Given the centrality of free associations for instilling democratic mores, the decline of civic engagement in the 20th and 21st centuries is alarming for societal cohesion and affectionate love, if not for the individual who can now dispose of his free time however he wants. Robert Putnam’s Bowling Alone is perhaps the seminal text on the decline of American civic institutions and regular participation in public life. Putnam showed, among many things, that American membership in civic organizations had declined across all educational brackets from 1967 to 1993 by about 25% in about as many years. The large organizations that took the place of local associations in the late twentieth century were structurally different than their forerunners. Primarily national or regional, the size of contemporary civic organizations can be a deceptive indicator of engagement, as they often require minimal active participation. Low production of “social capital” in today’s civil society is a function of the impersonality of associations, according to Putnam. He says, “The bond between any two members of the Sierra Club is less like the bond between any two members of a gardening club and more like the bond between any two Red
Sox fans (or perhaps any two devoted Honda owners): they root for the same team and they share some of the same interests, but they are unaware of each other’s existence.”24 The individual can now “belong” to various organizations at relatively low cost to his time or energy, but with an altered sense of “belonging.” The proposal that the card carrying member ought to actively abridge his self interest for the good of the AARP and his fellow senior citizens is laughable. The AARP is the modern ideal for a civic organization: it serves its members for modest dues, demanding little commitment. Affectionate love between members who remain mostly anonymous to one another is impossible.

Another societal trend that Putnam linked to the changing landscape of American civic engagement was that of the family unit. The data he analyzed indicated that since the 1960s, America had seen “fewer marriages, more divorces, fewer children, and so on.”25 Fifty years prior Bowling Alone’s empirical demonstration of this trend, Robert Nisbet observed in The Quest for Community that the family had “lost much of [its] historic function of mediation between man and the larger ends of our civilization.”26 While the divorce rate of 1953 was a fraction of its figure by 2000, Nisbet noted that the primary “spheres of interpersonal relationships” – especially the family – were losing influence over the individual. In his book The Present Age, Nisbet calls modern man “the loose individual,” loose from the traditional institutions that dictated moral framework.27 The individual was able to unlatch himself from these institutions because they were no longer the locus of redress for the concrete challenges of his existence. “The social problems of birth and death, courtship and marriage, employment and unemployment, infirmity and old age were [once] met, however inadequately at times, through the associative means” of the family.28 As political institutions gradually acquired those responsibilities, the family was rendered mostly an emotional support system. Without the practical function that the family used to play in the life of the individual, relationships within the family unit were unable to “perform adequately their implicit psychological or symbolic functions” – in other words, to provide familial, affectionate love.29

The decline of the family as a moral and institutional authority for the individual compounded the democratic limitation of gaining a temporal perspective on one’s existence. As the individual sought self-affirmation from institutions unconnected with his personal lineage, the difficulty of joining the past to the present thwarted development of affectionate ties to the past or expectant affection for the future. Estrangement from the knowledge of one’s ancestry breaches temporal continuity that reveals existence as a chronological narrative. The individual can develop, mature, and function without an engrained understanding of the past. Indeed, he is likely to be entirely unaware of how modernity narrows his consciousness of temporality. Though this change may go unnoticed by the individual, it nevertheless informs his expectations, feelings, and relationships – especially with those people who are responsible for his existence, temporal or otherwise: his family.

Upon the eradication of aristocratic ties that so chained man to generations of dead and unborn, the individual devolves instead onto humanity to identify with something larger than the self. Local prejudices and reliance on family status and history are unfounded and unnecessary for equals who are all part of the human race. Tocqueville tells us, “In democratic centuries...when the duties of each individual toward the species is much clearer, devotion toward one man becomes rarer: the bond of human affections is extended and loosened.”30 But Affectionate love, like all other human loves, requires a real object. The paradox of unrestrained individualism is that in placing the epistemic and ontological center within the mere individual himself, a dichotomy arises between man and the world, obscuring the subjective individuality of others, misplacing the object needed for real affection. As Nisbet writes, “The ‘people,’ no less than the ‘individual,’ is an abstraction, subject not merely to varying verbal usages, but also to historically changing political demands.
Exhorted to love all of nameless, faceless humanity — or even, on the national level of patriotism, all of America — the self-reliant individual can only be concerned with himself, or with an abstraction. Freed from the baronet’s dependence on the baronetage for self-definition, the autonomous individual believes he relinquishes ties to the past and forges his future independent of his ancestry. For this achievement, T.S. Eliot’s cries, “What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow /Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, /You cannot say, or guess, for you know only /A heap of broken images /Where the sun beats.”

For generations, families, free associations, and local communities “engendered the primary types of identification: affection, friendship, prestige, and recognition. And within them also [were] engendered or intensified the principal incentives of work, love, prayer, and devotion to freedom and order,” so says Nisbet. As these institutions release the individual from their influence, the relationships that once grounded man’s morals, ideas, and obligations, inevitably morph. As Nisbet further comments: “Interpersonal relationships doubtless exist as abundantly in our age as in any other. But it is becoming apparent that for more and more people such relationships are morally empty and psychologically baffling.”

The individual knows himself to be subjective, but defines himself against the broad foil of vague and abstract humanity. If he has a steadfast dedication to seek validation outside of himself, it requires fidelity to this abstraction, one that must be ideational or ideological. If the fundamental other for the individual is not specific persons, but rather amorphous “society” or “humanity,” his affection, if bestowed, will find an object that cannot reciprocate. Not yet the unconditional love of divine agape, affectionate storge flounders between atomistic individuals who are radically liberated from their definitive relational boundaries.

Kate Bermingham graduated in 2011 from the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences with a Bachelor of Arts in Government and English. She is currently working for The Philanthropy Roundtable in Washington, D.C.

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Analysis of the Allegory of the Cave

Rita Pearson

Does justice manifest within man or between men? If a man is capable of knowing the highest good, then why must his relations with other men be governed by external laws? In Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates speaks of both the just man and the just city, yet his description of each subverts the other; the just city is compromised of unjust men whose bestial natures are controlled by laws, whereas just men do not need to be governed.

When Socrates innocuously asks Glaucon, “There is, we say, justice of one man, and there is, surely, justice of a whole city too?”

, he does so under the pretense of creating a perfectly just city to understand and study a perfectly just man. The linear structure of Socrates’ argument does not convey the relationship between the city and the individual in reality. The just city does not actually precede the just individual; rather, their existence is codependent upon the other. Socrates likens the study of Justice to the study of mathematics, for both compel the soul to use “the intellect itself on the truth itself.”

As numbers themselves exist outside of the human perception of reality, the only way man can perceive them is by studying the shadows of the true numbers; numbers that “are attached to visible or tangible bodies” and are therefore within the limits of human perception. Similarly, the only way man can perceive Justice itself is by studying justice within visible or tangible entities.

By magnifying man to the size of a city, Socrates is able to describe how man must order his soul to be just. The lowest tier of the soul, which is lustful and greedy, corresponds to the craftsmen of the city who are immersed solely with material reality. The second tier of the soul, consisting of one’s relative morality and the strongest emotions within the human psyche - love and hate – corresponds to the warriors, who are bound by a keen sense of honor and who specialize in war, which is conceived in the turmoil of human emotion. Finally, the third and highest tier of the soul, the rational, corresponds to the philosopher-kings, whose perception of the truth itself obliges them to be reluctant rulers.

The problem that the reader faces, in trying to understand Justice itself, is to determine whether Plato places greater importance on the order of the human soul, or on the order of the city. *The Republic* begins with Socrates’ entreaty to Glaucon to properly define justice, yet Plato never reveals the source of justice for either the city or the individual. Justice itself exists outside of human perception; thus, it cannot be properly discussed within the constraints of human language. The only way Plato can approach Justice itself is through metaphor, which manifests through Socrates’ allegory of the cave.

The allegory of the cave begins with a description of individuals in a cave chained in such a way that they cannot move their heads or see their chains – all they can see are shadows moving on the cave wall opposite them. One individual is released from his chains and turned around - for the first time, he sees an array of statues with a fire behind them casting patterns of shadows on the wall. The former prisoner then walks past the statues and the fire, out of the cave, and into the sunlight. As his eyes slowly adjust to the light, he realizes that the statues
in the cave were only imitations of real objects. Finally, he is able to look up into the sun, the source of illumination that defines his new reality outside of the cave.

Which is real - the just city, or the just individual? If the just city is merely a crude imitation of the human soul, then it is only a statue in the allegory; it was constructed solely with the intention of moving the reader closer to Justice itself, which manifests in the correct ordering of the human soul. In the allegory of the cave, the philosopher-king is the only individual who can complete the journey out of the cave and look into the sun, or Truth itself. As the philosopher-king corresponds to the rational part of the human soul, then the rational must be the ruling force in the soul of the just man. The just city is only an imitation of the manifestation of justice in reality, which is the properly ordered soul, wherein every man controls his lesser desires, his perceived morality and his turbulent emotions, so that he is illuminated by the light of justice. Yet the reader must surely notice that in our reality human society does not dwell in an intellectual Eden, where every soul orients itself towards the greatest good, as many prefer material reality to the Truth itself. Conversely, if the reader instead concludes that the just city is the actual manifestation of justice in reality, then he must conclude that the majority of society does not care to or does not have the ability to journey out of the cave. If they do not desire to know Truth itself, then the rational part of their soul withers away, untouched. If they do desire justice, but do not have the ability to comprehend it, then they lack the rational component necessary to free their minds from their relative perceptions. Therefore, the three-part soul is only true of the highest of men; only they possess the ability to control their thymos and their bestial desires. For justice to illuminate the city as the sun illuminates reality, these men, the philosopher-kings, must externally control the majority of people, who lack the ability to control themselves internally.

The reader’s journey to understand justice is far more difficult than the man’s journey out of the cave in the allegory, because he must compare two reflections of justice that simultaneously undermine and create the other. The just individual is entirely free from earthly matters; he dwells within a metaphysical realm that is imperceptible except to the intellect. On the other hand, the just city demands hierarchy and obedience from all its citizens, even the philosopher king. The lesser individuals who cannot liberate themselves from the cave must defer to those who have seen the sun; justice will only manifest in their actions through their obedience to the higher men who have the rational capacity to act justly. Accordingly, those men who have seen the sun must descend from their divine contemplations; they must return to the cave to rule the world of shadows. After their eyes become accustomed to the darkness, they will “see ten thousand times better than the inhabitants of the cave,” as they will know what the shadows are, and what they represent, as they will have seen “the beautiful and just and good in their truth.” Yet the philosopher cannot attempt to enlighten their fellow prisoners; Plato warns that they would surely kill their liberator “if they were somehow able to get their hands on and kill the man who attempts their release.” On an individual level, seeking Justice itself frees the mind from its own relativity; on the group level, seeking Justice itself requires those who perceive it to deceive the rest, who are so completely imprisoned that they are unaware of their chains.

The genius of Plato’s writing lies in his use of a metaphor that is said to illustrate the benefits of liberating the mind, but in actuality reveals the tension between the individual and society that pursuing justice inevitably causes. He does not reveal which is only a concept of justice, and which is the actual manifestation of justice in reality. Both cannot exist simultaneously as manifestations of justice, yet neither can
exist without some concept of the other; a just city is composed of unjust individuals imprisoned by their own natures with the exception of the just ruler, while a just individual orders his soul based off his normative values of categories human actions within society. Why does Plato choose to discuss Justice through two entities that, when they reflect justice, necessarily contradict each other? Is he showing us that individual and political justice cannot both exist? Or, is he endeavoring to meet our limited conceptions, as we cannot comprehend absolute Justice? If this is the case, does Plato discuss two contradictory, distorted reflections of justice because we can only see the shadows on the cave wall, or because, by forcing us to notice their ambiguous, conflicting existence in what we reality, he hopes to make us aware of our chains?

Rita Pearson is a junior in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service studying Science, Technology, and International Affairs.
I am distressed by a growing trend in our society to view freedom chiefly in the context of entitlements and protections. Citizens invoke their rights pell-mell without pausing to consider that they have duties as well. Freedom has a higher purpose than the gratification of our appetites, but I fear that modern conceptions of rights have warped our understanding of justice into a thinly veiled apology for greed and exploitation.

Before going further, a brief example might help to explain what I mean when I say that we have distorted the meaning of human rights. The United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights proposes as fundamental rights things like: a right to free education, the enjoyment of the arts, full development of personality, and “the right to rest and leisure, including...periodic holidays with pay.” While laws regulating education and basic workplace conditions are important components of statutory law, they are by no means fundamental rights that must be uniformly recognized across all polities and cultures. The UN’s declaration typifies a conceptual problem that has become common in our national discourse – the confusion of laudable aspirations with non-negotiable rights.

Using the language of rights to describe partisan political aspirations has exacerbated the tensions between the left and the right in our country and has negatively impacted our republic’s ability to effectively govern. As moderates across the United States ponder ways to bring the country together, it may be helpful to reflect on the impact the rhetoric of rights is having on our politics and consider an alternative vocabulary for describing the challenges that confront us. The French philosopher Simone Weil and her philosophy of human obligations provides one such alternative. The power of discussing our problems in terms of obligations rather than rights can be seen when it is applied to the ossified debate surrounding taxes and entitlement spending.

This debate has engendered intense anger on both sides of the isle and cuts across cultural, geographic, and class boundaries. A cursory examination reveals that each side believes the other is trying to rob them of what they are rightfully owed, whether that is the money in their bank account or government services they currently enjoy. The anger of a person demanding his due does not arise from what Simone Weil would describe as the “profound and childlike and unchanging expectation of good in the heart.” An injury to the wallet does not cut that deep. This anger is superficial in character and is more akin to “the motive which prompts a little boy to watch jealously to see if his brother has a slightly larger piece of cake.” Putting the moral weight of justice behind the latter instinct has caused our society to pursue wildly irresponsible policies in the name of creating economic equity of one kind or another.

The political left has used the power of the government to secure “rights” of material enjoyment by creating social programs. It has displayed an alarming tendency to enlarge the net of social welfare beyond the scope of the coun-
try’s economic capacity, pushing us towards disastrous levels of entitlement spending in social security and healthcare. It is a mistake to assume they are acting in bad faith. Their programs address genuine problems confronting our society, but the political pressure associated with keeping those programs fully intact has rendered them incapable of moderating their position in the face of a mortifying national balance sheet.

The political right has been corrupted by the same instincts. Opting to use the force of the dollar rather than the state, they have pursued obstructionist policies on tax reform that prevent the country from raising the revenue it needs to support the programs it offers. Disregarding dubious references to the Laffer Curve, their real objection to higher taxes is the feeling that they are being victimized by policies that unjustly apply excessive force to the economically well off while asking far less of the majority of Americans.

Weil’s dynamics of force provides a useful hermeneutic for decoding America’s political gridlock. She writes:

> Force is as pitiless to the man who possesses it, or thinks he does, as it is to its victims; the second it crushes, the first it intoxicates. The truth is, nobody really possesses it.45

There is a compelling case to be made that the left has become intoxicated by the power of the state. Promising benefits to the majority at the expense of a faceless elite attracts voters by offering them the fruits of force applied against their fellow citizens. Rather than mitigating the inevitable exploitation arising from the actions of the market, the left has conceived of government as a tool to satisfy the ignoble passions of cupidity and revenge, using it to get their chance at exploiting others in turn. They promise more than the country is able to provide because they frame public projects as a burden placed upon the few for the benefit of the many rather than sacrifices that all must bear for the betterment of their fellow citizens.

The right is equally guilty of exploitation, and has become reactionary in its attempts to prevent power from devolving from the bank account to the ballot box. Fearing that they will become the victims of force if they bend at all, they protect the prerogatives of the free market without regard for the genuine injustices that arise in it. The result is a conservative party that is vulnerable to corporatism, resistant to the legitimate use of government power to support those in need, and incapable of increasing taxes when it is necessary to do so.

The tug-of-war over tax policy is a practical manifestation of a deeper philosophical problem. Under the guise of securing the rights of their constituents, whether to government services or lower taxes, America’s political parties have stopped regarding the state as a safeguard of the common good and have used it as a tool of class exploitation. The noble name of justice has become a front for shameless extortion and predatory corporate protectionism.

Blending political right with greed is dangerous because it “set[s] up as a standard of public morality a notion which can neither be defined nor conceived…[and leaves open] the door to every kind of tyranny.”46 Aristotle accurately identified the problem as a twofold pathology arising from our desire for “pleasures unaccompanied by pains”47 and “the nature of desire [to be] without limit.”48 In a healthy polity the laws are designed to provide a check on man’s insatiable desire for pleasure without accountability. The rule of law should create boundaries that force each party to hear the other’s case and come to a compromise with which both are somewhat dissatisfied, but which none can claim is unjust. In our country, decades of political infighting have battered the rule of law to the point that it is easily transformed into a weapon of faction. With that transformation, human-heartedness is driven out of the halls of government; the law has become “that x that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing,”49 i.e. an inhumane force whose unstoppable logic drives victims and victors into equal destitution.
Neither side seems capable of exercising what Weil refers to as “a moderate use of force, which alone would enable man to escape being enmeshed in its machinery.” Unable to extricate our politics from the machinery of force, the tenor of our national dialogue is unsurprisingly reminiscent of combat rather than deliberation. Despite the irreconcilable bombasts elected by both parties, there is a growing yearning for moderation from our government. David Leonhardt, an economist and columnist for the New York Times, won a Pulitzer prize in April of this year for developing an interactive program on the newspaper’s website that allowed readers to balance the budget of the United States on their own. The results, as reported in the Times, are telling:

Nearly 9,000 readers worked the puzzle. Individually, they were all over the map. But as a group, they accomplished the goal by splitting the difference: almost exactly half the savings came from tax increases, half from spending cuts. Collectively, readers seemed to realize that the hole we’re in is too deep to be filled by tax increases alone or spending cuts alone.

The vocabulary of our present discussion of these matters is ill suited to achieving the sort of compromise we would select in our moments of better judgment. The language of rights negates the possibility of discussion because an assertion of fundamental right leaves no room for compromise. As you might expect, one side asserts that it is entitled and the other is left responding that it isn’t so. Such mindless public discourse reinforces the inertia of our collective nosedive into deficit-ridden disaster. Our inability to address serious defects in our political system points to a failure in the language of rights that, as Weil predicted almost seventy years ago, “has proved unable, because of its intrinsic inadequacy, to fulfill the role assigned it.”

The focus on material enjoyment in conversations about public morality has also weakened our national resolve to make necessary sacrifices for the common good. When fundamental rights become a catalog of political largesse it is natural to believe that the good life consists in the enjoyment of as many of those pleasures as possible. It cannot be otherwise when the fundamental charters that establish world order declare anything less than their free enjoyment to be an injustice.

This predisposition to hedonism has made our society deeply uncomfortable with sacrifice. Our elders are incapable of summoning the will to cut themselves off from the public dole, our youths are indignant at the thought that they might need to work for their education, and the totality of our country is quick to go to war, but swift to bemoan the arduous effort associated with occupation and reconstruction. Premonitions of this laxity occurred as early as the 1840s, when Alexis de Tocqueville wrote,

The prospect really does frighten me that they may finally become so engrossed in a cowardly love of immediate pleasures that their interests in their own future and in that of their descendants may vanish, and that they will prefer tamely to follow the course of their destiny rather than make a sudden energetic effort necessary to set things right.

Both Tocqueville and Weil perceived the logical conclusion of doctrines of political entitlement. They lead to a sad apathy in which people are consumed with the indulgence of petty desires. We are encouraged to be tame and self-satisfied, counting our blessings as our dues and demanding our neighbor’s pay us a debt they do not owe. I don’t think this is a meaningful understanding of freedom, but its dominance in our national dialogue is driving our country into the ground.

While challenging to endorse in its entirety, Simone Weil’s theory of human obligation provides a much-needed counterweight to the politics of entitlement. In the preface to Weil’s book The Need for Roots, T. S. Eliot writes that Weil was “a patriot who saw clearly... the faults and the
spiritual weaknesses of contemporary France.” Much like our own country, the French republic grew out of a revolution that invoked the universal rights of men. Tocqueville notes that the Americans were blessed with inheriting a tradition that balanced the abstract ideals of universal rights with a commitment to preserving local government, and credits this with preventing our revolution from sliding into the excess of our French counterparts. Despite this initial boon, American localism has been on the decline since the end of the Second World War. Weil’s critique of her homeland takes on renewed relevance as our political culture comes to resemble that of France at the meridian of the last century.

Weil proposed a network of human obligation as the framework on which society should be built and rejected the so-called “rights of men” as a self-centered distortion of the truth. Human rights and human obligations are often identical in the liberties they guarantee, but they are founded on very different first principles. A theory of obligation is born of the understanding that human beings are responsible for meeting the spiritual and physical needs of other human beings, the satisfaction of which “cannot be subordinated either to reasons of state, or to any consideration of money, nationality, race, or colour, or to the moral or other value attributed to the human being in question, or to any consideration whatsoever.”

Weil is parsimonious in her list of needs, writing, “the list of obligations towards the human being should correspond to the list of such human needs as are vital, analogous to hunger.” A society actuated by the impulse to be its brother’s keeper will aim at providing for the basic needs of its citizens, but will recognize that coercion should extend only so far as the satisfaction of those needs requires.

While Weil’s rhetoric is tinged with the Marxism that infatuated her in her youth, a theory of obligation under no circumstances subordinates the individual to the collectivity. She writes:

A peasant may, under certain circumstances, be under the necessity, in order to cultivate his land, of risking exhaustion, illness or even death. But all the time he will be conscious of the fact that it is solely a matter of bread. Similarly, even when a total sacrifice is required, no more is owed to any collectivity whatever than a respect analogous to the one owed to food.

Applied rightly, this theory handles the problem of equity by demanding that everyone make sacrifices for the collective good, indeed it recognizes sacrifice for the collective as a vital component of man’s need for community and fraternity. The impulse toward sacrifice is balanced by a commitment to protect a wide range of individual liberties that are necessary to maintain a healthy psyche – this includes a respect for the need of private property and for protecting the fruits of individual initiative.

Weil is particularly luminous in her treatment of the problems of political faction:

It is the aim of public life to arrange that all forms of power are entrusted, so far as possible, to men who effectively consent to be bound by the obligation towards all human beings which lies upon everyone, and who understand the obligation. Law is the totality of the permanent provisions for making this aim effective.

Weil’s theory allows for the political divisions that inevitably arise in any community – those divisions are representative of differences in emphasis on the range of legitimate obligations and provide necessary compliments to each other. However, it has no room for the sort of factionalism that engenders suspicion and hostility between neighbors and treats elections as a desperate struggle to wrest the knife from the hands of an enemy. In this she calls to mind the farewell address of the first President of the United States, in which Washington warned against the tendency of party politics to sever the ties that bind citizens together in patriotic fellow-feeling.
This way of talking about political freedom stands in sharp contrast to the vision of citizenship presented by the devotees of rights— that of the private citizen as an island unto himself, accountable only to the law and divested of any responsibility for the quality of his community.

Classifying Weil under any philosophical heading is a dubious enterprise, but the degree to which she can be seen as an existentialist thinker rests upon her emphasis on taking responsibility for the actions of one’s society and oneself. The language of rights is not a language of personal responsibility. It demands that others recognize our needs without forcing us to look beyond ourselves to the needs of others. Weil’s clarity of thought in her consideration of this matter is exceptional. It comes through in her writing:

The notion of obligations comes before that of rights, which is subordinate and relative to the former. A right is not effectual by itself, but only in relation to the obligation to which it corresponds, the effective exercise of a right springing not from the individual who possesses it, but from other men who consider themselves as being under a certain obligation towards him.

Her logic compels us to contextualize our understanding of freedom. Before it, we are stripped of the luxury of treating men like isolated monads who are free so long as they are unobstructed in the satisfaction of their desires. The human condition is one of intimate interpersonal contact and any truthful articulation of human freedom must place individuals in relation to the others who define their existence. Sartre falls short in this regard, as do many other contemporary and classical thinkers who ignore the original admonition of The Philosopher, “that man is by nature a political animal.” Weil, I think, succeeds where they have failed.

She salvages freedom by decoupling it from liberty of choice. We do not fight for our freedom, nor is it parcelled out in millimetrical increments by a government or political party. Each and every person is confronted by the reality of freedom when he faces the choice of whether or not he will consent to be bound by the fundamental obligation which breathes life and power into all doctrines of rights, “by the single and permanent obligation to remedy, according to his responsibilities and to the extent of his power, all the privations of soul and body which are liable to destroy or damage the earthly life of any human being whatsoever.” Proposed as a new foundation for the French Republic after the war, this singularly powerful obligation rests at the center of Weil’s philosophy. Though choosing to recognize the obligations owed to others may entail a voluntary constraint on the liberties we allow ourselves, Weil contends that it is the only way to give meaning to that liberty.

The natural objection to Weil, the cynical objection, is that such a doctrine is only useful if men were saints. I’d challenge the skeptic that a flirtation with saintliness would do our nation well. No philosopher will transcribe an idea so powerful as to erase the wickedness of men simply through its proclamation—least of all Weil, who understands the freedom to err as an essential element of the human condition. Nevertheless, the language used in political deliberation has an effect on political outcomes. I can’t help but think that our country would be better served if its laws were structured around the obligation to alleviate human suffering and its discussions centered on the economic, intellectual, and spiritual space that every human being needs to flourish. Weil’s great lesson, when reflected on in this manner, is relatively simple—the language of obligation is closer to the reality of human freedom and is able to resist appropriation by the machinery of force and faction.

Alex Henderson is a senior in the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences studying Government and Philosophy.
Ordered Liberty
Why Libertarians and Social Conservatives Need Each Other and How Tocqueville Had the Answer All Along

Paul D. Miller

Libertarians and social conservatives need each other. By themselves, they look to outsiders narrow, shallow, and extreme. Libertarianism is heartless and cruel to its critics; social conservatism, bigoted and ignorant. More importantly, even on their merits they are insufficient. Neither by itself offers a coherent ideology on which a feasible political agenda can be based. Social conservatism fails to address the realities of cultural pluralism and is often reticent to grant the liberty enjoyed by a majority culture to minorities. Libertarianism errs in the opposite way, ignoring the vital cultural foundation of ordered liberty and the government’s role in fostering and supporting it. Both together start with a common insight—that human nature requires government to exist, but also to be restrained. That insight, in turn, should support a common agenda for ordered liberty: the devolution of power and renewal of local liberties.

I. Scylla

As Hamilton and Madison wrote in The Federalist Papers, “What is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature?” Human nature, according to most world religions, great philosophers, and a cursory glance at history, is capable of astonishing stupidity and evil. That means governments are little more than vast collections of stupid and evil people acting in concert. Governments therefore typically act with malice, irrationality, ignorance, and barbarity as a matter of course. There is no reason to expect otherwise, and history bears out that verdict. That is why governments often bear a strong resemblance to organized crime. As Augustine asked, “Take away justice, and what are kingdoms but great robberies?” Most governments throughout history have been little more than gangs of thieves and murderers. This insight is the seed of classical liberal thought, today represented most coherently by libertarians. Libertarians rightly fear the destructive potential of human nature when it is organized and given expression through great concentrations of power, particularly of political power.

That is why libertarians view the power of the United States Government with alarm. They look at the growth of the regulatory state since the 1930s and the national security state since 1945 with alarm. The government has dozens of agencies to coerce citizens on scores of different issues and can invoke seemingly infinite reasons to compel behavior. The government can seize your property in order to give it to someone who will make more profitable use of it, according to the Supreme Court in Kelo vs. City of New London (2005). It can seize your property without just compensation to protect the environment. It can take your property for months or even years without charges if it finds that your property was involved in drug trafficking. It can arrest and imprison you for weeks as a “material wit-
ness” without filing charges or issuing a writ of habeas corpus. Under hate speech laws, the government can arrest you for saying things that offend others. The government routinely confiscates up to half your wealth in taxation, mandates that you buy auto and health insurance, regulates which chemicals, foods, and drugs you can and cannot consume, and decides when and where you can pray and erect symbols of your religion. If it claims you are a terrorist, it can simply kill you.

The government advances plausible justifications for most of these powers considered individually. But libertarians understand that government inevitably seeks to accrete power, like a law of nature. They see few checks on the growth of the federal government’s jurisdiction and powers of enforcement, and they know where this trend concludes. And they also understand that government does not need to be vested in the hands of one man to be tyrannical. Democracies are just as capable of becoming tyrannical: all they have to do is disregard law and govern by raw power, as much of the federal bureaucracy seems to do.

Tyranny is, in fact, not really government at all. Under a tyranny men do not live under laws, but under the whim of other men. There is no predictable mechanism for resolving disputes. There is no real security or public order because the tyrant—whether a man, a mob, or a bureaucracy—may, at any moment, decide to rob or murder any citizen. The tyrant’s decisions are arbitrary, unreliable, and final. John Locke asked regarding tyranny, “I desire to know what kind of government that is, and how much better it is than the state of nature, where one man, commanding a multitude, has the liberty to be judge in his own case, and may do to all his subjects whatever he pleases, without the least liberty to any one to question or control those who execute his pleasure?” It is, in fact, no government at all. “Much better it is in the state of nature, wherein men are not bound to submit to the unjust will of another.”

This is the libertarian paradise.

II. Charybdis

It is difficult to organize an effective and long-lasting tyranny because it requires intelligence and cooperation to design and sustain a highly-organized system of oppression. Man’s stupidity happily limits his capacity to implement man’s evil. Cooperation must come voluntarily through trust or it must be coerced through terror. Trust is hard to sustain because people are evil—even tyrannies are undermined by corruption, petty graft, turf wars, and bureaucratic infighting. Terror, on the other hand, is hard to orchestrate and sustain because people are stupid—totalitarianism is a complex and sophisticated undertaking. Libertarians are right to fear tyranny, but they often give proto-tyrants more credit than they’re due. As a result, dire libertarian warnings about the encroachment of the state often sound like Chicken Little or the boy who cried wolf.

In fact, there is an equally dangerous possibility at the opposite pole from tyranny. Government is a difficult art—especially large, effective government over an expansive territory. Many governments fail not only to impose a tyranny worth fearing, but any semblance of government at all. The evilness of human nature can be channeled into oppressive concentrations of power, but the stupidity of human nature can sometimes take over and simply resist any exercise of power in institutions, governments, and entire nations. In that circumstance, human stupidity and evil is not concentrated in one locus of power; it is instead manifested in the absence of any power at all. In other words, if libertarians fear human nature when it is organized, social conservatives fear human nature when it is left to run amok. The result is social breakdown and state failure. In the complete absence of government, authority, or order, human nature is left in a state of nature, which is to say, a state of anarchy, war, and chaos.

Thomas Hobbes gave the famous description of the state of nature, and it reads like a contemporary journalist’s account of Somalia. It is the
social conservatives’ nightmare. “In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building...no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

Social conservatives look at the evidence of growing cultural chaos with alarm. Rates of crime, divorce, teenage pregnancy, out-of-wedlock births, drug use, school dropout, and illiteracy are high or rising. High school and college curricula do not convey the same content, at the same rigor, or to the same standard that they did for past generations. Education appears now to inculcate the lack of values instead of their presence. “Emergent” and “seeker-sensitive” churches offer concert-like entertainment rather than spiritual nourishment. Public discussion is more blunt, crude, and dissonant. The worldviews reflected in commercially successful television shows, film, and pop music are increasingly coarse, inhumane, and barbaric. High art is celebrated for overtly and publicly mocking traditional values. Mere anarchy has not quite been loosed upon the world yet, but we are slouching towards it.

To a social conservative, big government may be intrusive and expensive, but it also the only institution holding the line between us and the barbarians. We need a powerful government because the enemies of civilization are powerful. Drug cartels, the mafia, violent gangs, pedophiles, pimps, child pornographers, hackers, pirates, and terrorists are the Visigoth army at our gates. The FBI and the Marine Corps may be jack-booted, but the boots are made in the USA and they march to our tune.

III. Taking Our Bearings

Civilization is under perennial threat from both tyranny and chaos because of the enduring stupidity and evil of human nature. Tyranny is the concentration of too much power; chaos is the complete dissolution of it. Libertarians fear tyranny; social conservatives fear chaos. The former fears the growth of government is the road to serfdom. The latter fears the center cannot hold and embraces government as the tool with which to fend off social anarchy. The evils are the Scylla and Charybdis through which statesmen must steer the ship of state. And because human nature is fixed, the ship is never in the clear. The perils are forever just off the port and starboard. Statesmanship consists largely of recognizing which danger looms closer and edging the ship a little further off, even recognizing that to do so is to bring the opposite danger a little closer. The question of the moment is: which is closer? Does the government wield too much power, or not enough?

The problem is that there is little agreement about which is the greater danger today. Libertarians and others respond to social conservatives’ concerns with a shrug. They point out that the U.S. economy and political system continue to hum along. Every generation has its doom-sayers who believe things were better back then and the world is going to hell in a hand basket tomorrow—and they are always wrong. Social conservatives lack perspective and are only masking their bigotry as concern for social stability. Gay marriage and abortion didn’t cause the fall of Rome and they won’t hurt America, and social conservatives’ obsession with them will cause conservatives to lose elections. Meanwhile the growth of governmental power is the true threat that has caused great powers to collapse in the past.

Social conservatives respond that libertarians are a little paranoid in their fear of the American government’s supposed “oppressions.” Libertarian fears are the fevered conspiracy theories of people privileged to live in the freest society in the history of the world. Meanwhile, libertarians (and liberals) fail to understand the role of culture and society in a nation’s long-term life. Culture is the foundation beneath the economic and military greatness of
our country. Without it, no amount of budget-cutting, government shrinking, or tea-partying will make a difference. Culture is the sum total of the intellectual and ethical capital of the population. Investing in and protecting our culture means schools turn out educated people who will innovate, prosper, and not snicker at the words civic responsibility. It means families stay together and raise honest, whole, decent children who do not grow up to be burdens on the welfare state or penal system. It means churches, synagogues, the YMCA, and Boy Scouts are a real part of their communities. Ignoring the clear warning signs of an unhealthy culture is to fail to see that the bridge is out, the train is going full speed ahead, and the brakes are broken. If you look out the window, the view is nice and the ride feels fine. You have to know how the train works, and look ahead down the tracks, to understand the danger.

What if both sides are right? What if, like the blind men feeling the elephant, libertarians and social conservatives have both identified partial, incomplete aspects of a broader, deeper problem? None other than Plato believed that to be the case. Anarchy and tyranny can support and feed off each other in a strange and devilish symbiosis. Plato witnessed in Athens a democracy so unable to enforce basic order that it descended into anarchy—and then it turned to tyranny to save itself. Plato argued this dynamic was inherent to the very nature of democracy. In democracy, he argues, liberty becomes a kind of religion. Democracy makes “the souls of citizens so hypersensitive that they cannot bear to hear even the mention of authority.” Sons rebel against fathers, students against teachers, slaves against masters, and ultimately citizens against government. The excess of liberty leads to ruin, anarchy, and state failure. To escape anarchy the people will freely turn to a “protector” to restore order. In this way liberty leads to tyranny like an iron law of nature: “excess in one direction tends to provoke excess in the contrary direction.”

And we may be seeing the early stages of the convergence of trends in the United States, which means libertarians and social conservatives are both right, in their own way. Libertarians are right in politics: the government has grown beyond all reason and threatens to become an overbearing Leviathan. Social conservatives are right in culture: disorder and degeneracy are on the rise and threaten the long-term foundations of civilization. The trends reinforce one another. As social disorder grows, the state grows to meet the increasing demands made on it. And as the state grows, private and non-profit associations that constitute the remnants of a healthy culture are pushed out and replaced by government.

IV. Alexis de Tocqueville

Alexis de Tocqueville described this reciprocal cause-and-effect with remarkable and prophetic insight. “The more government takes the place of associations, the more will individuals lose the idea of forming associations and need the government to come to their help. That is a vicious circle of cause and effect.” Tocqueville believed the growth of government, even if for benign purposes, was threatening to liberty because it subtly undermined the cultural underpinnings of a healthy democracy. “The morals and intelligence of a democratic people would be in as much danger as its commerce and industry if ever a government wholly usurped the place of private associations.”

Taking over retirement insurance, health care, the banking system or the auto industry isn’t just bad economics: it teaches people an unhealthy dependence on the public dole, which may then force the government to continue running private industry as people forget the skill of doing it themselves. But government cannot recreate by fiat the culture of democracy that its own programs undermine. “A government, by itself, is equally incapable of refreshing the circulation of feelings and ideas among a great people, as it is of controlling every industrial undertaking.” The effort itself takes government beyond its rightful sphere and lays the groundwork for tyranny. “Once it leaves the sphere of politics to launch
out on this new track, it will, even without intending this, exercise an intolerable tyranny. For a government can only dictate precise rules. It imposes the sentiments and ideas which it favors, and it is never easy to tell the difference between its advice and its commands. Tocqueville believed this was a new kind of oppression, different from the cruel tyrants of the ancient world. Despotism in America “would be more widespread and milder; it would degrade men rather than torment them.” American tyranny will not rob and kill people. It would be “absolute, thoughtful of detail, orderly, provident, and gentle.” It appears benign, but has the subtly dangerous effect of engendering a culture of dependency. “It would resemble parental authority if, father-like, it tried to prepare its charges for a man’s life, but on the contrary, it only tried to keep them in perpetual childhood.” It grows so large and powerful that it does not just push out the private sector; it pushes out individual agency. “Why should it not entirely relieve them from the trouble of thinking and all the cares of living? Thus it daily makes the exercise of free choice less useful and rarer, restricts the activity of free will within a narrower compass, and little by little robs each citizen of the proper use of his own faculties.” It does not kill men, but it does kill their spirits. “Administrative centralization only serves to enervate the peoples that submit to it, because it constantly tends to diminish their civic spirit.”

The all-powerful nanny state does not stop at engendering a culture of dependency among individuals. It seeks complete control over society through “administrative despotism.” Tocqueville feared the potential of the regulatory state to smother innovation and energy. “It covers the whole of social life with a network of petty, complicated rules that are both minute and uniform, through which even men of the greatest originality and the most vigorous temperament cannot force their heads above the crowd. It does not break men’s wills, but softens, bends, and guides it...it is not at all tyrannical, but it hinders, restrains, enervates, stifles, and stultifies so much that in the end each nation is no more than a flock of timid and hardworking animals with the government as its shepherd.”

Big government essentially creates the conditions for anarchy by undermining healthy culture through large programs and invasive social policy, and then makes itself indispensable by moving in to stave off disorder with powerful regulatory, law enforcement, and national security powers. Its presence threatens Tocqueville’s new kind of tyranny, but its absence threatens chaos.

This is why libertarians have a point, even though the government is not overtly oppressive. The United States Government costs $4 trillion per year, about one-quarter of the U.S. economy. It employs two million people, not counting the armed forces or the postal service, more than any other institution in the country. Even disregarding the law enforcement and national security powers libertarians traditionally worry about, the scope and reach of the federal government’s activities have expanded dramatically over the past century. It built the roads you drive on, funds the schools you attend, regulates and taxes the place you work, polices the quality of the food you eat, regulates the bank you save in, and monitors the gas mileage of the car you drive. It regularly observes most of the earth’s surface from orbit, is the world’s largest dispenser of grants for scientific research, decides on the technical standards by which the internet is governed (which it invented), flies astronauts, satellites, robots, and telescopes into space and onto other planets, and deploys military personnel to dozens of other countries around the world. The United States Government is quite simply the largest, richest, and most powerful institution ever created in the history of human civilization.

But this is also why social conservatives have a point: culture matters. Populist social conser-
tatives often have a shallow understanding of culture and the dangers to it—the biggest threat to the family is not gay marriage, it is straight divorce—but their basic insight is correct. Schools, families, and churches are the most important institutions of civilization and the strongest bulwark against both tyranny and anarchy. They are the very font and source of all power and ability to have any kind of society in the first place. And they have undoubtedly lost much of their authority, respect, and heritage over the last century. Especially alarming is that once lost, fixing cultural institutions is a generational effort.

V. How to Save the Ship of State: Devolve, Diffuse, and Downsize

How do we escape the vicious cycle of social breakdown and government growth? The problem with both libertarianism and social conservatism is that they seem to assume that there is a fixed set of policy proposals, now and forever, which will solve our problems. They can sometimes become rigid, ossified ideologies. But true conservatism recognizes that there is no policy solution that will forever do away with one or the other great danger. Utopianism is fundamentally unreal. There is no policy agenda that is correct for all states in all times. Some states are closer to tyranny, some to chaos. What may be wise for one could be catastrophic for the other. True statesmanship will look different and propose different solutions depending on the particular circumstances of the moment.

The solution is not simply to cut taxes and spending, shrink the state, and repeal Obamacare. Libertarianism only works when the public is educated, responsible, and active enough to maintain civil society with a minimal state. Social conservatives would argue, plausibly, that the American public manifestly does not meet these criteria. The sudden deprivation of public support from a people with an unhealthy culture could accelerate social breakdown and hasten the day mere anarchy is loosed. Tocqueville again: “There can be no doubt that the moment when political rights are granted to a people who have till then been deprived of them is a time of crisis, a crisis which is often necessary but always dangerous.” We have been inured to the overbearing federal state for so long that it is unclear what would happen if we were suddenly called on to assume responsibilities for welfare, education, or social policy. Congressional conservatives have focused overmuch on taxes and the budget because they are the most visible and concrete policy areas where this contest for power is being played out, but those battles are inherently shallow and ephemeral. Victories can be undone in the next budget cycle. And libertarians have seriously failed to propose what would take the federal government’s place.

Nor is the answer simply to ban abortion and gay marriage or let the Christian Coalition and the Federalist Society rewrite the Constitution. Legislating healthy cultural practices, like Prohibition, treats the symptoms, not the causes, of social breakdown. More importantly, laws like Prohibition have a tendency to fail and discredit their advocates. As Tocqueville writes, “laws are always unsteady when unsupported by mores”—that is, habits and beliefs— and “mores are the only tough and durable power in a nation.”

Passing a law that the people don’t believe in and are not habituated to obey—like a total ban on alcohol or abortion—is folly. Using government to enforce good culture is like a parent moving into his kid’s college dorm room to ensure he doesn’t drink or have unsafe sex. If you haven’t inculcated good habits in your kid before they move away, you’ve already failed; trying to catch up by moving to college with them is not good parenting; it is overbearing and kind of creepy.

The effort to renew civilization is too broad and deep for any of these policy proposals to have much of a lasting impact. The effort is fundamentally a cultural and spiritual one. “Feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the
reciprocal action of men one upon another.”  

Alexis de Tocqueville believed that the way to sustain and renew civilization, especially democratic civilization, was to encourage face-to-face human relationships. It is trite and clichéd but true: the first step in saving civilization is to go to school, get and stay married, spend time with your children, and go to church. Investing in relationships with the people immediately around you—in your family, at work, in church, in your neighborhood—is the single most important thing you can do because those relationships will renew your ideas, develop your understanding, and enlarge your heart. Relationships make you smarter, wiser, and more loving.

This is not a sentimentalist bromide or a recipe for quietism: forming relationships is a political act. Relationships are the strong bulwark against the encroaching state. Relationships take place outside the government’s writ, create a society beyond the government’s reach, and foster ideas and activities government cannot direct. Tocqueville called this the art of association. For Tocqueville, association was the act of gathering with other citizens—not just family members, friends, and neighbors, but also perfect strangers—for a public purpose. Association is nothing less than the practice of self-government at ground level.

Tocqueville believed self-government didn’t simply mean voting (he hardly mentions elections at all in his entire work). Self-government means actually participating in the decision-making process. A true democratic republic puts the power of government into the hands of the people. City council meetings, town halls, the school board, and your neighborhood watch are the most real institutions of democracy with which citizens will actually come into contact. Participating in them is more important than voting in elections for the U.S. Congress. “The most powerful way...in which to interest men in their country’s fate is to make them take a share in its government,” Tocqueville argued, “The civic spirit is inseparable from the exercise of political rights.”

The face-to-face relationships we need to form are with our fellow citizens, even our political opponents. “If men are to remain civilized or become civilized, the art of association must develop and improve among them at the same speed as equality of conditions spreads.”

Here is where political advocacy can make a difference. Government can either allow or usurp people’s opportunities to engage with other citizens on public matters. A highly centralized government gives me no incentive to talk to my neighbor about our common problems or to form an association to solve them. A highly decentralized one depends on my associating with others. The more opportunities to participate, the better. “[The Founders] thought it right to give to each part of the land its own political life so that there should be an infinite number of occasions for the citizens to act together and so that every day they should feel that they depended on one another,” Tocqueville wrote, “Local liberties, then, which induce a great number of citizens to value the affection of their kindred and neighbors, bring men constantly into contact, despite the instincts which separate them, and force them to help one another.”

“Local liberties” are the answer. The solution is to devolve power away from the federal government, diffuse it among states, individuals, civil society, and the market, but also to strengthen its exercise through our participation. This should be the unifying theme of American conservatism. It reflects an agenda based on the bare essentials, the common philosophical convictions of different strands of political thought: diffusing power among individuals (libertarian), civil society (social conservatives), and the market (entrepreneurs). The solution is not to cut government, but relocate it. The solution is not to shrink government, but rebalance it from Washington to states, localities, individuals, and private groups. The solution is not to attack government as the enemy, but take it over as our right.

Decentralized government alleviates the danger of tyranny by dispersing power among fifty states, six territories, three thousand counties, ten thousand cities, millions of associations,
and one-third of a billion citizens. Decentralized government also alleviates the danger of anarchy by compelling citizens to stand up, take part in self-government, associate with one another, and form real human relationships. Decentralization is the caulk and pitch, the rope and plank, that will keep our ever-growing ship of state together, keep it from being torn apart by the centrifugal forces of anarchy, keep it from imploding under the weight of the centripetal forces of tyranny.

Paul D. Miller graduated in 1990 from the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences with a Bachelors of Arts in Government, and from the Georgetown Graduate School in 2010 with a Ph.D in Government. He is currently Assistant Professor of International Security Studies at the National Defense University.
During the second half of the twentieth century, a sharp schism emerged in American Christianity, the legacy of which can still be felt today. “Fundamentalists” took an uncompromising stance on Biblical doctrine, and aligned themselves with political conservatism. On the other side of the spectrum were the “Progressives” who tended to be both theologically and politically liberal. This divide was evident by the Civil Rights era when both sides were represented by well-known demagogues: Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. on the Left, and Rev. Jerry Falwell on the Right. However, the theological schism of the Civil Rights era had its roots in an event which occurred on August 6, 1945. On that fateful day, President Harry Truman ordered the uranium bomb ironically called “Little Boy” to be dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in an attempt to expedite the end of World War II. The bomb killed over 100,000 civilians instantly. Three days later a plutonium bomb was dropped over Nagasaki, Japan causing similar devastation.

After the war ended, hundreds of thousands of survivors were faced with the horrible effects of the bombs. Meanwhile millions of Americans were forced to grapple with the moral consequences of their actions. America’s strong religious tradition makes it unsurprising that American religious leaders felt duty-bound to weigh in on this difficult moral dilemma. Initially most Americans believed that dropping the bombs was the right thing to do—by a margin of 85 to 10. After all, the bombs led to a swift end to World War II. However, America’s Christian leaders were more divided over the issue. The Federal Council of Churches (FCC)—an organization which represented millions of Christians and several Protestant denominations—said of the bomb, “Certain theological problems have been set, almost overnight...” Indeed, they were right.

On August 9, 1945 at 10 p.m. Harry Truman delivered a message from the White House in which he announced to the American public that two atomic bombs had been dropped on Japan. When he discussed the justifications for dropping the bomb, he began with military and diplomatic concerns. He alluded to Germany’s quest for an atomic bomb, and then outlined Japanese atrocities during the war (including Pearl Harbor, and the atrocious treatment of American prisoners of war). While Truman relied primarily on military justifications for his decision, he acknowledged the moral questions raised by the bomb. He began by saying “Thank God that it [the bomb] has come to us, instead of to our enemies...” There are still echoes of a military justification in this statement seen in his reference to “our enemies,” yet he framed the argument in religious terms that most Americans could readily identify with. According to Truman, the bomb was not merely a military invention, but also a gift from God. He also invoked religion in discussing the future atomic age: “…We pray that He may guide us to use it [atomic technol...
ogy] in His ways and for His purposes.” Truman sought to placate any potential objections to using the bomb that could arise from religious leaders by assuring them that his nuclear policies would be guided by Divine Providence.

On the same day, Samuel Cavert—the General Secretary of the Federal Council of Churches—sent Truman a telegram informing him that President Oxnam of the FCC and Chairman John Foster Dulles of its “Commission on a Just and Durable Peace” (who would later become Secretary of State under Eisenhower), were both preparing a message asking Truman to give Japan a chance to surrender before dropping more bombs. On August 11, Truman replied:

Nobody is more disturbed over the use of Atomic bombs than I am but I was greatly disturbed over the unwarranted attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor and their murder of our prisoners of war. The only language they seem to understand is the one we have been using to bombard them. When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast. It is most regrettable but nevertheless true.

Although Truman acknowledged the moral gravity of dropping the atomic bombs, he reasserted his “eye for an eye” morality citing Japanese war crimes as reason for such revenge. Truman was resolved to use as many atomic bombs as necessary in order to convince Japan to surrender. By ending with the phrase, “regrettable but…true,” Truman sought to sympathize with dissenters while asserting that the facts were on his side. Nonetheless, Truman’s sober rhetoric illustrates the difficulty of justifying the use of nuclear weapons. Fortunately for Fundamentalists, they faced few problems with criticizing the President’s decision. With Japan in such a sorry state, the use of pathos was incredibly easy. An early example was a scathing editorial published in the widely-circulated magazine The Christian Century on August 29, 1945, entitled “America’s Atomic Atrocity.” It alluded to letters sent to the magazine from readers feeling “horror and revulsion…guilt and shame” over the use of an “incredibly inhuman instrument.”

The editorial accused Truman of ignoring the moral considerations involved, and implied that the decision was made far too hastily: “No sooner was the bomb ready than it was rushed to the front and dropped on two helpless cities, destroying more lives than the United States has lost in the entire war.” The Christian Century concluded by conveying concerns regarding the effect of the bomb on the future of Christianity, arguing that it would be only natural for the Japanese to resent Americans (and thus American Christians) for the use of the bombs. In order to save the reputation of Christianity among the Japanese people, “the churches of America must dissociate themselves and their faith...from the government’s use of the atomic bomb” and “divorce the Christian community from any responsibility for America’s atomic atrocity.”

The magazine argued that Christians were morally bound not only to disagree with the president’s decision (and his view that the bomb was a blessing), but to do so vehemently in order to eliminate even an appearance of complicity in the use of atomic weapons.

In the next year, the wishes of the editor of The Christian Century would be realized, at least to some extent. In 1946, the Federal Council of Churches summoned several of America’s leading theologians to participate in the Calhoun Commission to discuss the morality of the atomic bomb and the implications of the coming Atomic Age. In March of that year, the Commission issued a forceful critique of the use of atomic weapons in a report called “Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith.” While Truman sought to justify his decision in military terms, the FCC
argued that “[w]hatever be one’s judgment of the ethics of war in principle, the surprise bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are morally indefensible.”92 They thus placed the context of the debate purely in terms of the morality of atomic weapons. The FCC was frankly uninterested in military justifications—regardless of how persuasive they may have seemed. Like Truman, the FCC had taken a firm, non-negotiable stance. For Truman, the bombs were necessary, period. For the FCC, dropping atomic bombs on citizens was unequivocally wrong, period. These firm stances, diametrically opposed to one another, made consensus virtually impossible. Finally, the FCC had a much different vision of how Christians should act in the coming Atomic Age. While the FCC was willing to consider a world where atomic technology could be used “for His purposes,” they made it very clear that they were not referring to the nuclear weapons. They sought to use atomic energy for “human welfare and not for world suicide.”93 As for atomic weapons, the Commission argued that “all men and Christians in particular are required to search their hearts and minds…and to seek with the greatest diligence for effective ways to abolish this diabolical horror.”94

Christian criticism of atomic weapons continued well after the attacks, and was not limited to Protestants. In 1947, a group of moralists from the independent Catholic Association for International Peace95 met and issued a report called “The Ethics of Atomic War.” Like their Protestant counterparts, they condemned Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb, claiming that “Deliberate and direct attack on [noncombatant civilians], no matter what the end sought, would be simple murder.”96 Although the Soviet Union would not successfully test a nuclear bomb until 1949, there were concerns that future wars would involve nuclear weapons. The committee wrote that, “Any war that is started in the future will very probably begin with a large shower of atomic bombs” and after an attack a nation would find “a large part of its people dead.”97 They argued that “it is to be doubted that in the future any war at all will be a moral one…” They lamented what they regarded as the inevitable death of the long-revered Augustinian Just War Theory, making a subtle Catholic appeal to tradition, as well as an appeal to morality aimed at the more general American public. This report demonstrated that the developing schism would transcend denominations.

The Progressives had firebrands as well. In 1947, Protestant theologian and pacifist A.J. Muste published a book called “Not by Might,” which was one of the strongest religiously-motivated anti-nuclear polemics of its day. In arguing that, “[t]here was no clear ‘military necessity’ to ‘justify’ these crowning atrocities,”98 Muste pointed to evidence that Japan was considering peace talks, and that a land invasion (which many had argued would have led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers) was not imminent. Then he traced the growing intensity of the violence of WWII from the use of flame throwers against combatants, to the bombing of Dresden, to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With each new level of violence he used the phrases “But we didn’t stop there,” and “And that was not enough,”99 portraying American military leaders as men with an unquenchable bloodlust. He concluded, “…If we permit the atomic armament race to continue and are dragged into the war which must then ensue, the America we have known will perish…”100 Muste believed that Americans had to do everything in their power to avoid this fate. He called on all Christians to denounce the use of atomic weapons, telling them that “The healing and recovery of civilization, the taming of the atomic bomb and all that it implies, must begin with and in you and me.”101 Thus, Muste not only expressed an opinion, but essentially issued a rallying call to Christians everywhere to reject Truman’s religious argument and oppose the proliferation of nuclear weapons. But not all American Christians would agree.

While ultimately supporting the bomb, Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr published a cautious article in his journal Christianity and Crisis in 1945 conceding that the atomic bomb had brought about an “uneasiness of conscience.”102
One can imagine, he argued, the difficulty of using religious arguments to justify the use of atomic bombs. After a few years passed, however, and the fears of the ‘Atheist’ system of Communism began to spread, some religious leaders began speaking out in favor of the bomb and against those who were concerned about using nuclear weapons in a possible war with the Soviet Union. One such man was Rev. Carl McIntire, who founded the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) as a Fundamentalist alternative to the Federal Council of Churches. In 1948 his organization met for an annual conference and denounced nuclear disarmament: 

For us to have the atomic bomb and, in the name of a false morality born of a perverted sense of self-respect and pacifist propaganda, to await the hour when Russia has her bombs to precipitate an atomic war, is the height of insanity and will, when the fateful hour comes, be a just punishment upon us.103

Like the Progressives, McIntire believed that the Soviet Union would acquire nuclear weapons technology, but rather than using that fact as a reason to condemn the danger of nuclear weapons, he argued that the United States must be prepared. He did not address the atrocities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or the ramifications of nuclear war. His willingness to support nuclear war can be explained by a speech given in 1953, where he held that “Communism, with its atheistic view of God and materialistic view of man is diametrically opposed...to the Christian concept of God and of man. The two worlds are irreconcilable.” He believed that America was in a tense dichotomy that could only be ended when one of the competing worldviews was destroyed. In the same speech he warned listeners that “Communism is a diabolical conspiracy for the destruction of human freedom and Christianity.”104 Operating under that belief, it was logical to support the total destruction of Soviet Union by any means necessary, before it succeeded in destroying America.

McIntire continued to discuss nuclear weapons well into the 1950s. A debate over atomic testing and disarmament in the August 15, 1957 issue of his newspaper, Christian Beacon, reminded readers that nuclear weapons were still at the forefront of this divide. The World Council of Churches (a globalized version of the FCC) issued a statement calling for an end to atomic weapons testing and production, partial disarmament, and greater international cooperation. This hearkened back to the pacifist declarations from religious leaders and groups in the 1940s. Unsurprisingly, McIntire held a different view. He scoffed at the WCC’s idealism. “It is morally irresponsible to assume and propose that conditions of mutual trust can be established with an atheistic, anti-God, materialistic Communism which recognizes no moral standard of any kind.” McIntire concluded his argument by accusing the WCC of trying to “lead men to believe and hope that somehow the Devil’s agents in the Kremlin will agree to their own deception of ‘peaceful coexistence’.”105 Here McIntire articulated his irreconcilable belief that anyone preaching nuclear disarmament was naive and potentially in league with the Communists—and thus, an agent of the devil. He had conflated doctrinal differences with anti-Communism and intensified the decade-old debate over the atomic bomb.

During the peak of the McCarthy era, McIntire’s rhetoric became even stronger and more influential. While most Americans were paranoid about a Communist infiltration, McIntire made explicit accusations that Progressives were not only sympathetic to Communists, but had in fact been infiltrated by, and had become tools of the Communists. For instance, in 1948, the ACCC Convention opposed the appointment of John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State because he was believed to be “an effective tool of extremely radical and pacifist churchmen,” because of his affiliation with the National Council of Churches (formerly called the Federal Council of Churches).106 A later article published in the Christian Beacon shows that the schism had worsened: “In the battle against the historical Christian faith,
as represented by fundamental Protestantism, there are lined up the Communists, the Roman Catholics, then the Liberal Protestants... These three forces join together...”

Originally a disagreement over the bomb, the split among Christians began to grow into what one side began calling a “battle.” The Fundamentalists accused those who opposed their viewpoint of being aligned with Communists.

The fact that the Fundamentalist’s accusations were made during the height of the McCarthy era meant that the consequences were not only theological, but highly political. The United States government took accusations of Communism very seriously during the 1950s. Accusation of Communist sympathies could destroy careers, as well as rally people to the anti-Communist cause. In 1953, Fundamentalists met in Washington, DC to discuss what Fundamentalist Robert Ketchum succinctly described as “…a Satanic modernism and destructive socialism have entered [American churches].”

After that, McIntire proceeded to list twenty-five “individuals known as clergyman” that he wanted HUAC to place under oath and question. McIntire especially focused on Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam—former president of the FCC. In fact, that evening the ACCC passed a resolution saying that “Oxnam should not be permitted any longer to evade a hearing before the Un-American Activities Committee...” In his speech McIntire praised Representative Donald L. Jackson (R-CA) for accusing Bishop Oxnam on the floor of the House of Representatives of serving “God on Sunday and the Communist front for the balance of the week.”

On July 21, 1953 the ACCC got its wish. The attacks by Fundamentalists had been so persuasive in Congress that Bishop Oxnam actually had his faith and loyalties called into question by HUAC. The man who on August 9, 1945 had pleaded with Truman to give the Japanese a chance to surrender before dropping more bombs and presided over a Christian Council that condemned the use of nuclear weapons was now defending his reputation from over seven years of false accusations of “un-American activities.” He explained his reason for coming as follows: “When any man or any committee questions [my] loyalty, I doubt that I would be worthy of the name American if I took it lying down.” Oxnam asserted that he was not a member of the Communist party, and that he believed in the Christian faith. He also condemned the committee for not bothering to objectively investigate the Fundamentalists’ claims. Seeing the lack of any legitimate evidence against him, the Committee ultimately accepted his testimony, dismissing the accusations of those like McIntire and Rep. Jackson. In fact, there was never any substantiated evidence of any “Communist infiltration” in churches, or seditious acts by liberal Christians. This incident, however, demonstrated the political intensity that the Christian schism had reached. Such a bitter divide was unlikely to heal easily between conservative and liberal Christians, and indeed, we can still see its legacy today.

Thus the disagreement over the morality of atomic weapons became progressively more intense and political over the decade after the dropping of the first atomic bomb. Within a few years, reconciliation was unlikely, for both sides spoke of the controversy with moral absolutism. Progressives believed that the use of atomic weapons was morally indefensible. From this perspective, Fundamentalists were defending an abhorrent and even sinful weapon. Fundamentalists believed that the bombs were justified and necessary in order to protect America and Christianity against “godless” Communism. From this perspective, nuclear Pacifism and negotiating with the Soviet Union was tantamount to being in league with the devil, at the expense of Christianity. Because neither side offered room for common ground, American Christianity divided into two factions. The animosity that arose between these two groups over the nuclear question set the stage for future politicized conflict, and ensured that religious tension about other political issues over the course of the twentieth-century was inevitable. As we move into the
twenty-first century, we can see echoes of this divide in Christian disagreements on economic and social issues. It is imperative that we as a nation reflect on the origins and the nature of this divide in order that we may avoid rehashing the hostilities of the past and instead work toward a more perfect union.

Joshua Donovan is a junior in the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences studying History and Government.
In a handwritten draft of his July 4th Address to a Special Session of Congress, Abraham Lincoln noted his anticipation that “more rogues than honest men” would be affected by the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* during the Civil War. Lincoln’s decision to strike this remark from the final version of his address showed his determination to construct a legal rather than logistical argument to support his actions. The suspension Lincoln defended in his first speech before Congress varied drastically over the course of the war, ranging from a limited restriction along the military supply line between Philadelphia to Washington to one applying nationwide to “all persons discouraging volunteer enlistments, resisting militia drafts, or guilty of any disloyal practice, affording aid and comfort to Rebels against the authority of United States.” As the terms of the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* expanded, Lincoln faced increasing partisan criticism and skepticism even within his own party. Though the writ of *habeas corpus* had never been suspended on so large a scale before, Lincoln avoided the violent reaction to the restriction of civil liberties that he had faced enacting the draft. Press reaction to Lincoln’s speeches, letters, and proclamations reflected the perception of the American people living in the Union during the war. Lincoln first gained acceptance by establishing a legal foundation articulated in the July 4th Address and later earned popular approval with his reply to Erastus Corning, crafting an appeal that emphasized the human lives at stake in the matter. Thus Lincoln managed popular concerns and won public support for a policy which remains one of the most controversial actions of his presidency.

Two trends have emerged in analyses of Lincoln’s suspension of *habeas* appeals. Some historians including Mark Neely have argued that Lincoln became bolder with regard to extending the terms of the suspension, since he grew more secure in his legal reasoning and more focused on the day-to-day management of the war: “…the Lincoln administration overcame its fears of public reaction to restrictions on civil liberties, instituted a novel internal security system, and came to believe it worked.” Neely has argued Lincoln became more confident as his focus shifted away from the legal basis for his actions and towards the daily operations of the war. Other scholars like James McPherson have suggested Lincoln entered the presidency as a strong statesman and later became a strong military leader by using political measures and legal tactics: suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* and the implementation of the draft to conduct an effective war. Scholarship on civil liberties under Lincoln tends to emphasize his development from a legal-minded scholar to commander-in-chief or successful politician working with
the other branches of government to ensure his policies were carried out. Another dimension to Lincoln’s transformation as a leader involves an evaluation of his public relations efforts. Lincoln became a stronger statesman when he realized that he needed to humanize the issue of *habeas corpus*. When Lincoln framed his argument in human terms, he transitioned from a lawyer to effective statesman.

The suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* in 1861 was not unprecedented in American history. The writ protects citizens from unlawful imprisonment; when a prisoner demands a writ of *habeas corpus*, he is taken before a court that will determine if the detention is lawful. There were two well-known instances in which the writ had been suspended prior to the Civil War. The first case occurred during the War of 1812, when General Andrew Jackson declared martial law in New Orleans and ignored the writ. The writ was also suspended during the Dorr’s Rebellion in Rhode Island in 1842, an event which remained in popular memory; a *New York Herald* editorial compared the case for suspension in 1842 with that of 1861. But these cases represented temporary and geographically limited suspensions. The suspension during the Civil War would last much longer and cover a much larger territory.

The scale of the suspension during the Civil War quickly set it apart from the previous two cases. It began within the first month of the conflict. The suspension of the writ in the Union initially focused on the military supply line between Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. Though it covered the area between southeastern Pennsylvania and the capital, the order was given to empower the military to subdue the riots taking place in Baltimore, where mobs were destroying the railroads and attacking soldiers. The public generally supported this first measure, agreeing with the president that the city of Baltimore was in a state of chaos. Baltimore was not the only location where anti-war protestors interfered with the movement of troops, so by October Lincoln had given General Winfield Scott authorization to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus* along the military line as far north as Bangor, Maine. Because there was no single military supply line, especially when it came to moving troops, the expanded order created a large and loosely defined area in which someone could be detained.

Lincoln’s cautious implementation of the suspension reflected his appreciation of the uncertain political atmosphere. When first broaching the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, Lincoln approached the matter with great care. His first order was made two weeks into the insurrection, in the form of a private note sent to General Scott on April 27, 1861. The two sentence correspondence authorized Scott to suspend the writ along the military supply line between Philadelphia and the capital if Scott encountered “resistance which render[ed] it necessary to suspend the writ of Habeas Corpus for the public safety.” Lincoln issued this limited suspension in a tenuous political climate. Border States were still threatening to secede. The city of Baltimore was in a state of open rebellion. Virginia had joined the Confederacy ten days before the order, and North Carolina, Arkansas, and Tennessee would soon leave the Union as well. Maryland, the state implicitly targeted by this order, would soon hold a meeting to determine whether it would leave the Union too. Lincoln did not wish to provoke a reaction that might jeopardize the status of Border States, so he made his message clear: the suspension was being implemented to ensure public safety.

In contrast to this first private order, Lincoln’s first public proclamation suspending *habeas corpus* limited its application to the islands of Key West, Santa Rosa, and the Tortugas on the coast of Florida. Lincoln stated that his order was in response to the insurrection in Florida and the endangerment of “the lives, liberty and property of loyal citizens of the United States” and that it was “deemed proper that all needful measures should be taken for the protection of such citizens, and all officers of the United States.” This proclamation was carefully and deliberately justified and very limited in its potential application since it did not include mainland Florida. It seemed to be a companion piece
to the Southern blockade. This restricted proclamation was altogether uncontroversial, and for its very limited application was thoroughly justified in terms of protecting citizens and maintaining public safety.\(^{123}\)

This first public suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* thus applied to Confederate territories and drew little notice from newspapers in loyal states. In its coverage of this news, the Kentuckian publication the *Louisville Daily Journal* reproduced most of the language of the proclamation in its Telegraphic News bulletin. The report is found midway through the second of two May 11 dispatches. While the three paragraphs dedicated to the proclamation show it was neither ignored nor marginalized, the placement of the coverage on the third page of the four-page newspaper just after the news that Major Anderson had left for the North suggests that this news was not an important concern for the readers of the *Louisville Daily Journal*.\(^{124}\) While the *Louisville Daily Journal* had a Republican slant, Kentucky was a border state that had flirted with the idea of secession, but ultimately stayed loyal to the Union.

Though the public was aware of the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* granted by Lincoln’s private April 27 order, the matter only gained national attention after Chief Justice Roger Taney responded to the arrest of John Merryman on May 25.\(^{125}\) In addition to holding his position as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Taney was also the sitting federal district judge to whom Merryman applied for a writ. Taney granted a writ of *habeas corpus*, but his order was then refused by the Major General George Cadwalader, who cited Lincoln’s suspension. The exchange culminated with Taney citing Cadwalader for contempt and issuing *Ex parte Merryman*, in which Taney declared the president’s order unconstitutional.

The press quickly responded to the Merryman controversy and the issue incited a geographic divide between Baltimore newspapers and publications outside Maryland. Publications from Baltimore supported Taney and Merryman. The *Baltimore Sun* lamented the “subordination of civil authority” and expressed horror at the consistency with which Northern press denounced Taney.\(^{126}\) An editorial from the widely circulated *New York Herald* drew a comparison to one of the two previously known cases for the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* in the United States, Dorr’s Rebellion in Rhode Island, noting Taney’s decision in the Dorr’s Rebellion case directly contradicted the position he had taken in *Ex parte Merryman*. The *Herald* attributed Taney’s inconsistency to the belief that the Chief Justice, most famous for authoring the *Dred Scott* decision, was “in favor of the Southern confederacy, and his opinion…warped accordingly.”\(^{127}\) “Who will say there is not rebellion in Maryland, and that ‘the public safety’ did not ‘require’ the arrest of the rebels?” the editorial asked, quoting the provision of the Constitution that defines the legal grounds for suspending of the writ of *habeas corpus*.\(^{128}\)

The circumstances of the case worked in Lincoln’s favor: Merryman was accused of burning bridges and interfering with the war supply line in Baltimore, the precise reason for which the writ of *habeas corpus* had been suspended. The *Boston Sunday Herald*, another northern newspaper which declared its impartiality on its front page, accused Taney of undertaking “to aid the cause of secession” with his actions.\(^{129}\) These examples are representative of the response from the Northern press, which favored Lincoln to Taney. However, they also demonstrate that papers were already defending Lincoln before he began to defend himself. He gained support with the decisiveness of his actions before even justifying the suspension through legal reasoning.

Lincoln chose not to respond directly to Taney’s decision and instead waited until his July 4th Address before a Special Session of Congress.\(^{130}\) The address was Lincoln’s opportunity to justify the measures undertaken in his management of the war during his first two months in office and in the absence of Congress. Lincoln decided to defend, in particular, the most questioned legal aspect of his actions: whether or not he had the authority to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*. Lincoln accounted for his actions, describing them as measures necessary for the faithful execution of the presidential oath to preserve and
protect the Union. Lincoln gave his justification for the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* in the rhetorical question: “are all the laws, but one, to go unexecuted, and the government itself go to pieces, lest that one be violated?” Lincoln continued, defending the legality of his actions in the provision of the Constitution:

It was decided that we have a case of rebellion, and that the public safety does require the qualified suspension of the privilege of the writ which was authorized to be made. Now it is insisted that Congress, and not the Executive, is vested with this power. But the Constitution itself, is silent as to which, or who, is to exercise the power; and as the provision was plainly made for a dangerous emergency, it cannot be believed the framers of the instrument intended, that in every case, the danger should run its course, until Congress could be called together; the very assembling of which might be prevented, as was intended in this case, by the rebellion.\(^{131}\)

Lincoln’s defense thus omitted a direct reference to *Ex parte Merryman*, but it made an argument that challenged Taney’s decision. Lincoln noted the lack of specificity within the Constitution and made the same argument that the *New York Herald* had made weeks before in response to the Merryman case when the *Herald* asked “Who will say there is not rebellion in Maryland, and that ‘the public safety’ did not ‘require’ the arrest of the rebels?”\(^{132}\) Addressing both Congress and the American public, Lincoln therefore made his legal rationale clear while simultaneously emphasizing the “limited extent” of the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*.

The response of the press to the president’s address was divided along partisan lines. The *New York Journal of Commerce*, a Democratic publication, determined that the president’s remarks on the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* failed to “throw any new light upon that question.” Meanwhile the *New York Tribune*, a newspaper which did not adhere to a political ideology, and the *Philadelphia Ledger*, a Republican newspaper, both praised Lincoln for his frankness in articulating his goals relating to the suppression of the rebellion.\(^{133}\) Republican and unaffiliated newspapers appeared to be uniformly supportive of the president’s message and his argument, while Democratic newspapers like the *New York Journal of Commerce* continued to express reservations with regard to Lincoln’s policies. Thus, Lincoln’s opposition and many of his supporters were partisan about the issue. At the same time, Lincoln’s argument was sufficiently logical to pacify political opponents into merely reiterating reservations rather than calling for drastic protests. After the July 4th Address, two years passed before Lincoln offered another widely circulated argument defending his expanding suspension of the writ.

The creation of the draft incited a wave of violent clashes, but also fundamentally changed the application of the suspension. In desperate need of troops, the Union instituted a levy with the Militia Draft Act of 1862. The passage of conscription led to violent clashes between soldiers and mobs of angry protesters in cities around the country. Copperhead Democrats (staunchly anti-war Democrats who sometimes went as far as supporting the Confederacy) began making speeches encouraging draft dodging and desertion, two things which were already a problem for a Union with flagging enlistment numbers. The suspension of *habeas corpus* had already been used in a manner designed to support the recruitment and retention of troops. This time, however, it was expanded significantly with a proclamation given on September 24, 1862, which drastically extended the conditions under which the writ of *habeas corpus* could be denied:

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during the existing insurrection and as a necessary measure for suppressing the same, all Rebels and Insurgents, their aiders and abettors within the United States, and all persons discouraging volunteer enlistments, resisting militia drafts, or guilty of any disloyal practice...shall be subject to martial law and liable to trial and punish-

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ment by Courts Martial or Military Commission.\textsuperscript{134}

A person speaking against enlistment anywhere in the Union could technically be arrested for expressing his opinions. However, this proclamation and a similar one given on August 8, 1862 by the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, “were sincerely meant to enforce conscription rather than stifle dissent—which explains their relaxation in one month’s time after most draft quotas had been filled.”\textsuperscript{135}

While the controversial September 24, 1862 proclamation provoked more visible displays of outrage than had previous orders, the reaction remained divided along partisan lines, and never reached the level of violence of the protests contesting the military draft itself. Nevertheless, this order established a suspension that went far beyond the limited scope of Lincoln’s first proclamations. The outrage from this second order actually reached its pinnacle nearly a year later with the highly publicized case of the Copperhead Democrat Clement Vallandigham. Even though Congress’s passage of the Habeas Corpus Act on March 3, 1863 added to its earlier blanket approval of Lincoln’s actions in July 1861, these resolutions affirming the legality of Lincoln’s actions did not signal the end of debate over the suspension of habeas corpus.\textsuperscript{136}

The uproar from the notorious military arrest of Clement Vallandigham led Lincoln to write the most resonant defense of his position. Vallandigham was detained in Ohio on May 5, 1863 after making remarks discouraging enlistments and decrying the war efforts, consciously violating General Ambrose Burnside’s Order 38, a reiteration of Lincoln’s September 24\textsuperscript{th} proclamation. Reacting against the arrest of Vallandigham, which was viewed by many Copperhead Democrats as a repression of free speech and a display of Lincoln’s “dictatorial powers,” several rallies were held in North.\textsuperscript{137} The most prominent of these was held in Albany and resulted in the production of a set of resolutions. The response these resolutions inspired from Lincoln was later singled out by his advisors John Nicolay and John Hay as having made one of the strongest impressions upon the public mind of all his state papers.\textsuperscript{138}

Lincoln’s reply to Erastus Corning and others, or “the Albany Copperhead Committee” as the Chicago Daily Tribune called them, did more than respond to the legal issues in the complaints of the Albany group. It went beyond Lincoln’s determination that one law could be sacrificed for a short time for the preservation of the Union.\textsuperscript{139} In his letter, printed in full alongside the resolutions of the Albany group on many front pages in June 1863, Lincoln crafted an argument both practical and personal, calling up the disparity between detaining an anti-war agitator and sentencing to death a young soldier who deserted the military on the instructions of the agitator. “Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert? … I think that in such a case, to silence the agitator, and save the boy, is not only constitutional, but, withal, a great mercy.”\textsuperscript{140} Lincoln received many letters praising his response, and the press also congratulated his efforts. One man wrote, “in my opinion, it is conclusive in argument, charming in spirit, and worthy of all the praise in patriotic devotion to the country and Constitution.”\textsuperscript{141} People responded to the personal nature of the argument. By admitting desertion was a serious problem for the military and that it pained Lincoln to know young soldiers were vulnerable to the speeches of experienced agitators, Lincoln drove a poignant message home to the public by emphasizing this distinction between an impressionable young soldier, who would have to pay for desertion with his life, and an agitator actively working to undermine the war effort.

After the summer of 1863, there was less opposition to the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus because Lincoln had made a compelling appeal to the public that addressed the human aspect of the policy. Debate would continue among staunchly partisan critics, but popular opinion supported
Lincoln’s management of civil liberties in relation to the war. There were still problems: thousands of arrests were made by military officers throughout the country and poorly reviewed by the War Department. The fine line between dangerous dissidents and citizens expressing their opinions without bringing harm to the armed forces meant that mistakes occurred. Many political dissidents, mostly Democrats, were among those arrested on sight at the discretion of the soldiers. Yet Lincoln was able to overcome the partisan divide by humanizing the dilemma he faced. In the Corning letter, Lincoln admitted that these arrests did not please him. He recognized both the young deserter and the agitator were individual citizens, and he simply preferred to detain the more culpable of the pair than to execute the confused party. Lincoln had grown from lawyer to statesman and had learned to connect effectively with the people over a dense legal issue that had serious implications in the daily lives of American citizens.

As Lincoln undertook a policy that greatly expanded executive powers, restricting the only common-law process explicitly included in the Constitution, he managed popular concerns and unrest by framing the issue in human terms. He set the stage for presidents to come by modeling how to successfully govern in the absence of Congress. Lincoln’s presidency pioneered the strong role of the executive during times of national emergency. Moreover, Lincoln established a model from which an ambiguous Constitutional power, written in Article I of the Constitution and thereby connected to the legislative branch of government, could be evoked by the president and become an essential part of executive policy. The comparison of the argument made by Lincoln in 1861 in his first address to Congress and that of the eloquent and much celebrated Corning letter in 1863 show two different sides of Lincoln. The first emphasizes his legal side. Lincoln made a convincing argument that his authority to suspend the writ of habeas corpus was found explicitly in the Constitution and assuaged certain public concerns that he was overstepping his bounds. Where Lincoln truly shined was in his connection to the people on a personal level. The change between the two arguments showed Lincoln’s development from lawyer to adroit politician, able to convey a complex legal matter in a resonant way and gain popular support as a result.

Rachel Cox is a senior in the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences studying History.
Saint Hugh of Lincoln (1135 – 1200) is one of the most paradoxical figures in the history of the Church. A Carthusian monk who had dedicated his life to contemplation of God, he found himself thrust against his will into a position of ecclesiastical authority during the reign of the Angevin kings, a time of troubled relations between church and state. Despite having prepared for a life of isolated asceticism, he proved highly adept at charming the political elites of the era, winning the respect of even the monarchs most obstinately committed to expanding royal power in Church affairs. What explains how this austere monk managed to so effectively navigate the turbulent political waters of his day? His strong personal piety convinced those who knew him that he was a man of truly singular holiness, uninterested in temporal affairs. In a world of power politics, Hugh stood so far above the petty intrigue and infighting as a man committed entirely to God that he commanded the trust of virtually all of his contemporaries. As a result, he was able to cultivate the influence necessary to be an effective advocate and servant of the interests of his beloved Mother Church.

As is the case with many medieval saints, Hugh demonstrated early on his suitability for the religious life. The future bishop’s pious father arranged for him to be educated at the Austin Canons’ monastery in Villarbenoit beginning at age eight. He soon grew to love the strict monastic discipline, and he eagerly awaited the chance to act on his vocation and give himself to an order, though he knew not which one. At nineteen he was made a deacon, and his eloquent sermons endeared him to his congregation. During this time, he manifested the qualities of sound judgment, patience, and uprightness that would later make him so politically influential. On one occasion, after a parishioner’s adultery had become known in the community, Hugh prudently decided to admonish him privately. When the man proved defiant, Hugh met with him again in the presence of a handful of witnesses, attempting to move him to contrition. When the man remained obstinate, Hugh finally rebuked him publicly, bringing the sinner to repentance.

The future saint finally settled on the Carthusian order, to whose blend of the eremitical and coenobitical lifestyles he seemed well suited. Hugh traveled to the order’s original monastery, the Chartreuse, where he marveled at “the physical austerities of the inhabitants, their untroubled spirit, their freedom of mind, their cheerful countenances and the simplicity of their words.” At first it seemed that he would be prevented from joining; an elderly monk found him unprepared for the rigors of the order. Encouraged by the other monks, though, he persisted. Finally, in a rare act of disobedience, he broke an oath to remain with his superior, stealing away to Chartreuse to secure entry into the order. Hugh later recalled, “I never felt the least misgiving but rather heartfelt joy whenever I remembered an act so profitable to myself.” Indeed, he flourished as a Carthusian. Its contemplative nature and emphasis on learning...
allowed him to continue his studies, and the balanced mixture of solitude and company met his spiritual needs. In an unusual move for a Carthusian, he even became a full priest. After ten years at the Chartreuse, Hugh was chosen as procurator, overseeing lay brothers, guests, and all administrative matters. All the while his reputation for piety, effectiveness, and impartiality grew, eventually reaching the ear of the king of England.

In 1172, Henry II, first of the English Plantagenet kings, needed to atone for a particularly egregious sin, the murder two years earlier of Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury. The deed had shocked Europe and brought serious repercussions from Rome. As penance, Pope Alexander III ordered the monarch to erect three monasteries. One of these was to be a house for Carthusian monks, the first in England. The decision, however, was easier for the pontiff to make than it was for the king to fulfill. Henry granted land at Witham, located in the southwestern county of Somerset, for the project, and several monks from Chartreuse crossed the English Channel to help establish the new house.

The residents of Witham, fearing for their property, greeted the foreigners with animosity. The original prior, comfortable only in cloistered monastic environs, felt unequipped for the task and returned home. His replacement proved just as incapable, and he died shortly after arriving. The monks grew worried at the apparent intractability of their problems, and Henry also grew concerned that his project would implode, exposing him to the ridicule of other rulers. Turning to the count of Maurienne for advice on how to proceed, Henry was informed that Chartreuse’s procurator, a virtuous and capable man, might be able to be of assistance. The relieved king soon dispatched a delegation to entreat the procurator to oversee Witham’s construction.

With great trepidation, Hugh departed from the Chartreuse for Witham. He first had to solve the conundrum involving the displacement of Witham’s native inhabitants. With Henry’s sanction, he offered them either property similar to their current holdings that would be located on royal manors or freedom from villeinage. However, he went beyond the king’s original instructions, urging Henry to compensate the inhabitants for their homes. When Henry refused, he threatened to walk away from the project, a move that managed to force the king’s assent. Hugh further asked that the homes be donated to him. Henry, unsure of the reason behind the monk’s odd request, complied. In a remarkable display of shrewdness and moral decency, the procurator promptly returned the homes to their inhabitants for resale or transport, allowing the villagers to actually benefit from their eviction.

The next travail in Witham’s construction tested the relationship between Hugh and the Angevin king. Funding for building at Witham soon dried up, and though the king continuously promised more aid, he never delivered. The king’s apathy finally provoked an outburst from Gerard, one of the numerous monks who along with Hugh had visited the monarch to solicit more money. In a philippic he lambasted the king for his inordinate attachment to wealth, threatening to leave the country. After the tirade, Henry, noticing Hugh’s manifest embarrassment at his friend’s outburst, asked whether he would leave England as well. The future bishop’s response displayed the extraordinary moderation and tact that endeared him to the monarch. Instead of heaping on yet more criticism, he attributed Henry’s reluctance to his occupation with his kingly duties, expressing his confidence that the ruler, a loyal servant of God, would make good on his penance. In response Henry embraced the prior, pledging his devotion to the completion of the project, and he soon sent the necessary funds.

Once the construction of Witham Priory was finished, Hugh tried to return to his quiet life of contemplation, but he found that his fame throughout the realm had greatly increased. Witham itself had cultivated a reputation for holiness throughout England, attracting to its cloistered environs many religious and secular scholars who sought the counsel of the Carthus-
sians. The king in particular sought the prior’s wisdom, continuously soliciting advice on spiritual matters and lavishing great affection upon the future saint. Having completed his duty, though, Hugh refused to discuss temporal matters with the monarch. Instead, Hugh counseled Henry on his spiritual life and relations with the Church, at times rebuking the king for the vacancies in ecclesiastical offices and his interference in elections.

Despite such admonishments, the high esteem in which Henry held the Carthusian never diminished. In fact, the stern advice may even have helped to solidify it. As a monk in the Carthusian order, which promoted for its religious brothers a return to the life of early Christian hermits, Hugh was able to dissociate himself from worldly matters, politics especially, and hence give frank, honest counsel even to those in positions of great power. As a result, those same elites, King Henry foremost among them, came to see him as a trusted confidante for precisely this reason. Unlike other prelates who involved themselves in the minutest details of the affairs of the realm, Hugh’s advice could be trusted as impartial and disinterested, as having in mind the good of the counseled soul and of the subjects of his rule.

Paradoxically, Hugh’s scrupulous avoidance of partisan political entanglement would catapult him to a position of great authority and influence. The favor he found with the king led to his nomination as a candidate for a bishopric. Although the future saint strenuously objected, he was nonetheless consecrated bishop of Lincoln on September 21, 1186, in Westminster Abbey, making him the only Carthusian bishop in English history. He performed his new duties as a bishop with the same dedication and care that had characterized his life in the priory. As fellow clergyman Gerald of Wales admiringly testified, “The entire church of Lincoln knows with what watchful care, once he was consecrated and enthroned, he fulfilled all the duties pertaining to a bishop.” Yet he did not allow his elevation to clash with his religious vocation. Despite the many demands of his office, he managed to find the time to return to Witham several times each year for quiet prayer and contemplation.

Hugh’s responsibilities as bishop brought him closer to the direct involvement in the political arena that he had always so carefully sought to avoid. Yet he handled these situations with great tact, uncompromisingly defending the Church’s interests without at the same time inciting the political authorities to wrath. In one instance characteristic of the way in which Hugh dealt with political controversies, he pacified with humor Henry’s anger at the fact that his foresters had been excommunicated and that a favorite of the monarch had been passed over for church office. Arriving at the king’s estate to a hostile court, Hugh noted the king silently sewing a leather bandage around his finger. The monk jested, “How you resemble your cousins at Falaise,” referring to the illegitimate birth of Henry’s great-grandfather William the Conqueror or to a tanner’s daughter. After the king laughed uproariously, tensions eased and Henry readily accepted Hugh’s explanations of his actions.

Sometimes, however, Hugh had to be firmer and more resolute in defending Church prerogatives. He became embroiled in a controversy with Richard I, Henry’s successor, over fees that the monarch demanded the diocese of Lincoln render unto him. After hardnosed bargaining, the two agreed that the diocese would pay a reduced fee and never be subject to tribute in the future. A more serious clash involved the provision of troops for the king’s fight against Philip II. The politically-minded Archbishop of Canterbury Hubert Walter demanded of Hugh troops for the conflict, but the bishop refused to comply, stating that the diocese was only obligated to furnish soldiers for the protection of England itself. On hearing of Hugh’s defiance, Richard ordered his belongings be confiscated. Refusing to be cowed into submission, the future saint traveled to see the king and excoriated him for his actions. The king blamed the decision on his subordinates despite the fact that they had refused to carry out the order for fear of excom-
communication, and he promptly reversed course. A few months later, the king, with Walter’s complicity, demanded twelve Lincoln canons to serve as envoys to the Roman curia at their own expense. Hugh forthrightly told the messenger summoning the canons that they had no obligation to serve the king. Richard once more ordered the bishop’s property confiscated, but compliance was obstructed by the royal subordinates’ fear of excommunication. When the order was finally executed, Hugh left once again to see the king in France, but Richard died from war wounds before his arrival. Despite his tumultuous relationship with the monarch, he graciously attended the funeral.

The bishop’s relationship with Richard’s successor John was also strained. Hugh harbored strong suspicions and dislike of the monarch on account of his avarice. During the offertory collection of a mass shortly after his assumption of the throne, the king manifested great reluctance to part with his coins. When Hugh inquired as to the reason for the hesitation, John responded, “I am looking at these gold pieces and thinking that if I had had them a few days ago I would not have delivered them to you, but have pocketed them; but now you can take them.” Infuriated, Hugh refused the gold and ordered the king away from the altar. The king proceeded to interrupt Hugh’s sermon three times, demanding that the bishop finish quickly so that he could eat. Despite the tension between the two and Hugh’s staunch defense of Church prerogatives, however, John was clearly impressed with the bishop’s piety and holiness, to the extent that he served as a pallbearer at his funeral.

If one word serves to encapsulate St. Hugh’s life, it is paradox. The man who desired to follow a vocation of cloistered contemplation, who deliberately avoided the wrangling of political existence, came to occupy a position of great power and influence on precisely this account. Through it all, however, he never forgot his status as a servant of Christ and his Church, acting always with an eye to justice and the greater glory of God on earth. The bishop of Lincoln often told the story of a Count of Nevers, Gerard, who shunned his noble life and became a monk at the Chartreuse: “There, like a true pilgrim in this world, he took up the cross of the Lord daily, and following him without turning back, he went from strength to strength before he was rewarded with the sight of the Lord in Zion.”

Kevin S. Baird is a senior in the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences studying Government and History.
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render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God, the things that are God’s.”¹⁶⁴ This familiar passage from Saint Matthew’s Gospel may well be considered the scriptural basis of Roman Catholic political philosophy. It is one of the most political teachings in the New Testament, a document that does not purport to address itself to politics. Yet this command of Christ is not merely political. It is also richly liturgical in its admonition to render to God that which is His: worship. The fact that political and liturgical teachings are both implied in this most crucial of passages raises the question of the relationship between the political and the liturgical. Does liturgy fit into the enterprise of political philosophy, and if so, where? The very etymology of the word ‘liturgy’ indicates that there is indeed a relationship between liturgy and the polity. As Graham Ward has noted, the Greek leitourgia was a technical-political term for a service rendered to the city or state, a work or labor with respect to a people or community. Current usage of the word refers to an ecclesiastical rather than political service, but this does not preclude a relation between liturgy and the polity.

Divine worship originates in piety, a kind of justice that seeks to repay that which cannot be repaid. It is impossible for man to engage in a proportionally just exchange with God. Yet man nevertheless feels driven to make a return to God and he does this principally in the liturgy. We see this clearly in Psalm 116, prayed at communion in the Tridentine Mass, which explicitly raises the question of how what we shall return to the Lord for his many gifts. We see here that the ‘justice’ of piety upon which the liturgy rests transcends the justice upon which the polis is based. Piety implies that repayment cannot be fully rendered on some debts, which hints that there are things beyond strict justice.¹⁶⁵ As Aristotle knew, friendship is that which is beyond justice. The liturgy, in recognizing that the justice of the polis is not enough, offers man the truest and highest friendship, that with God.

Liturgy, then, may be found at the edges of what can be considered proper to the polity. At the limits of political philosophy, man realizes that the aim of political life is not attained in the political realm as such, but rather in a life devoted to contemplation of the highest things. Philosophy is therefore, as Strauss said, “necessarily accompanied, sustained and elevated by eros. It is graced by nature’s grace.”¹⁶⁶ Strauss seems to be indicating that, at the limits of philosophy, there is an opening to the transcendent, an opening to grace, an opening that perhaps gives way to worship and liturgy. In the preface to his book Feast of Faith, the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger asserts that, in the midst of the “political and social crises of the present time and the moral challenge they offer to Christians… concern for the proper form of worship…is not peripheral but central to our concern for man himself.”¹⁶⁷ Indeed, liturgy stands at the threshold where politics and even political philosophy can go no further. Liturgy stands as the natural and necessary limit to the political, bringing man to the end for which he was ordained from all eternity, an end where politics can recognize and promote but ultimately cannot accomplish.

To see how liturgy does this, it is necessary to consider man’s nature and end. As David Berger has insightfully noted, “man is by his God-given nature a liturgical being, which means that the liturgy as sensual expression of reli-
This is probably a statement with which Aristotle, for whom the end of man was the contemplation of the highest things, would agree, for man as a liturgical being is the summation of man as a contemplative and political being. As a liturgical being, man heeds the Socratic admonition to live the examined life, or stated another way, the awakened life: “The man formed by the Liturgy is the man who is awake in the highest sense of the word. He is not only inwardly open to hearing the voice of God; he is not only aware of ultimate Truth, but he also looks on all earthly goods in their true light.” The man who is awakened by the liturgy and lives an examined life, is able to discern with prudence even earthly goods of a political nature. Herein one is confronted with what von Hildebrand termed “the classical spirit in the liturgy,” namely, that “He who penetrates the Liturgy with open eyes and heart would like to exclaim, ‘O Truth, Truth, Truth!’ Everything is pervaded here with the breath of the Holy Ghost, everything is irradiated with the lumen Christi, everything testifies to the eternal Logos. All semblance, wavering, illusion, all that is false, extravagant, or cramped is dispelled.”

The polis exists to facilitate man’s journey toward his contemplative flourishing, but it in itself cannot accomplish this end – only liturgy can. Of course, if we are to have authentic contemplation and worship then we must have leisure. Leisure, the ability to open oneself to the whole of reality, is what allows man to be open to God. It is the precondition of true liturgy. Only when we are open to the whole of what is can we be so awed and inspired by it that we are moved to celebrate it, to ritually recognize its beauty and goodness. Moreover, it is only when we are exposed to something that is not ourselves, something that is not a product of human artifice, that we can recognize it as a gift freely given and deserving of thanksgiving.

Liturgy picks up where the polis, properly considered, leaves off in guiding man to his end. It is that through which man transcends both himself and the political realm: The realization of man’s contemplative end is only achieved in a brand of festive leisure that is understood as an act of divine worship. In this act, however, we begin to approach the polis, for our act is ‘cultural’ in the sense that it constitutes a public cultus. That is to say, in worshiping God, man builds culture and culture in turn is used as a mode of expression in the liturgy. This relationship between liturgy and society was perhaps most evident in the Middle Ages. As Catherine Pickstock has remarked, “mediaeval social practice was definitively ritual or liturgical in character. There simply was no duality of the liturgical and the mundane...Such specifically ecclesial occasions as the celebration of the Mass, processions, festivals, and pilgrimages, extended beyond themselves. For all forms of social interaction were themselves embedded in a structure of worship, ritual, and charity.” Thus, liturgy conditioned all social interactions, constantly reminding man that he is not the highest being.

In modernity, however, we find a rejection of this view. The modern project was designed to ‘liberate’ man from grace and the obedience that it entails. As this modern project developed in the late Middle Ages, ‘the political’ began to emerge as a rival to ‘the liturgical’ in that the state sought to remove social interactions, culture, from their liturgical grounding. The Enlightenment, as well as the Romantic reaction to it, went even further, attempting to divinize the community itself. This is a radical negation of true liturgy, premised as it is on the openness of man to something outside himself.

Modernity culminates in a Nietzschean vision of the world as a canvas onto which man projects the creations of his will, a worldview that pridefully rejects the need for liturgy and the grace it confers. Salvation comes instead by man’s own hand, by his indomitable will to power. The impulse underlying this rejection is, as Voegelin has noted, fundamentally Gnostic. It seeks to realize the kingdom of God in this world, to achieve immanent salvation and deliverance. Gnosticism seeks a world without liturgy because liturgy is, by its nature, antithetical
to the Gnostic enterprise. Liturgy implies something otherworldly, something entirely outside the capacity of man’s will to effectuate, to which he owes his very existence. The Gnostic cannot acknowledge this reality because it implies that salvation cannot be achieved in this world.

In this attempt to deny the relationship between the liturgical and the political, its importance is in fact brought into sharper relief. The more human efforts are directed towards the end of world-immanent salvation, the more distant they grow from the contemplative life of the spirit. The more they are thrown into the great enterprise of salvation through world-immanent action, the farther the human beings who engage in this enterprise move away from the life of the spirit. Since this life is the source of order in man and society, the very success of a Gnostic civilization is the cause of its decline. Liturgy, as the highest expression and realization of ‘life in the spirit,’ is the great ordering principle for men and their own souls, for the realization of their end, for how men relate to each other and the polis, and ultimately for the polis itself.

To understand this liturgical ordering, one must see the liturgy as reflective of cosmological order. The liturgy, in reflecting the order of the cosmos, orders the souls of the polis’ citizens, who in turn seek to order the polis according to the cosmos. The liturgical life of the spirit, in directing man towards his end in contemplation of and communion with God, simultaneously directs the proper ordering of the polis according to the cosmic order, so that the liturgy becomes integral to the true flourishing of the common good. The liturgy continues to proclaim exactly that which Christ proclaimed in Matthew’s Gospel: “Over and above Caesar, regardless of who he is or what is his, stands God.”

Kieran G. Raval is a junior in the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences studying Government.
The sea, writes Melville, “is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.” Christian reviewers denounced *Moby-Dick* for its perversions of basic Christian doctrine and for its questionable theology and fascination with classicism and polytheism. Yet Melville’s essential commitment to an unscientific approach to the divine, one that shuns Enlightenment rationality, finds some comfort in many 18th and 19th century Protestant theologians, Søren Kierkegaard being a great example. Melville wrote into *Moby-Dick* his own rebuke of the Enlightenment’s pure reason, Transcendentalism’s gregarious and embracing divinity, and Skepticism’s agnostic denial of the inexplicable. *Moby-Dick*’s approach to the supernatural suggests an ineffable, nigh unutterable, view of a very distant and inhuman God.

Through both Ishmael and Ahab, Melville unveils a veiled God that is completely and inexpressibly transcendent to a mankind incapable of transcendence itself. Ahab’s mask analogy gives the clearest picture of the inscrutable and intangible God, which forms the epicentric root of the novel’s remaining analogies for God. “All visible objects,” philosophizes Ahab, “are but as pasteboard masks … [but] some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask.” According to Ahab, the natural world is a sham, a pretentious and capricious delusion used by God to mask Himself. The Lord of Hosts is a beguiler-god with the character of Loki, the distance of First-Mover, the wrath of Jehovah, and the unbending omnipotence of the Creator. For man, the masked God is particularly vile because God is purposefully incomprehensible and ineffable, possessing an immortal reason but showing himself to mortal Earth as unreasoning. This God directs and rules over all things, but as a form of hiding: “If man will strike, strike through the mask! … That inscrutable thing [the mask] is chiefly what I hate.” God exists in the operations of things, but will never be found in them. A God of this nature constitutes a complete rejection of natural theology and pantheistic Transcendentalism. God welcomes none, but distantly crafts an elusive world, the act of which leads men like Ahab to their rage and “hate.” Ahab’s conjecture is that if God resists all forms of peaceful and tolerable approach, then perhaps He will yield to force. That this too is a total failure surprises no one, but only underscores how shrouded God is.

Science, too, offers no answers and even less solace than Ahab’s approach. Using the whale as a synecdoche for all of nature, nature being the mask put on by God, Ishmael tries three times to reasonably grasp the whale, before he concedes that the universe requires “poetic imagination,” but “even so allude[s] final understanding.” In paintings, Ishmael notes that the “sober, scientific delineations” are but “the mechanical outline of things,” and fail to capture the whale as he is: “in full majesty of might,” in an “incomputable flash of time,” and in “unfathomable waters.” Ahab, likewise, scorns science, bashing his quadrant to pieces when he realizes, “but what after all canst thou do, but tell the poor, pitiful point … Science! Curse thee, thou vain toy; and cursed be all things that cast man’s eyes aloft to that heaven … as if God had meant...
him to gaze on his firmament.” Ishmael submits that “the great Leviathan is that one creature in the world which must remain unpainted in the last,” and, by metaphor, “eternally impossible for mortal man” to hoist in true form before his eye. Even in dissection, getting as close to the whale as Ishmael possibly could, the whale remains “wholly inexplicable.” When Ishmael relents in his inquiry, he says, “I but go skin deep; I know not him [Leviathan], and never will.” The God of Ahab and Ishmael is the same, completely anathema to investigation and reason, and utterly inarticulable, unreachable, and inexpressible.

Ahab’s attempts to experience God take all of these notions to their fully expressed extreme. Ahab cries to God for solace from his miseries, but realizes that “the secret of our paternity lies in [the] grave, and we must there to learn it,” implying that God is so inscrutable that he can be found only in death. Ahab, however, lacks the tranquil assurance of Christian death, for he invokes a much more necrotic and fatalist tone. The unenlivened phrase “we must there to learn it” also suggests a much less peaceful and easy education. This, in addition to the impenetrable apathy of God (which this essay will address near the close), suggests that any connection with Christianity, even the harsh Calvinism that T. Walter Herbert Jr.’s critical essay explores, may be insufficient.

At the beginning of the chase, Ahab soliloquizes his version of faith: “Ahab never thinks; he only feels, feels, feels; that’s tingling enough for mortal man! to think’s audacity. God only has that right and privilege.” Ahab rejects philosophical contemplation, reserving knowing for only God, praising a life “under orders,” bent towards a God so “in”—credible as to demand total submission. As he had said earlier in his mask speech, “in the living act, the undoubted deed” is the only place to experience God, an experience that draws him closer to the eyes of heaven than Ishmael, Starbuck, or any of the others would dare go. Horrifyingly, this ultimately shows him that what lies behind the celestial shroud is an alien and morbid deity, fully uncaring and fully unmediated.

As the Pequod cascades to its doom, its crew find themselves helplessly adrift before an unspeaking and unspeakable God. When Starbuck takes fright at the ominous chase of Moby Dick, he implores Ahab to relent, pointing to the various signs sent from God foretelling their doom. But Ahab chastises Starbuck’s theology, retorting, “If the gods think to speak outright to man, they will honorably speak outright.” Still, neither Starbuck nor any other hears any divine consolation, for he realizes that the omens against the Pequod have not taken the form of warnings. Instead, the omens represent the fatalistic foretelling of a God determined to see Ahab and all his crew sunk to Hell: “Great God!”, wails Starbuck, “but for one single instant show thyself … Shall we be towed by him to the infernal world? Oh, oh,—Impiety and blasphemy to hunt him more.” The “him” of this sentence seems to refer to Ahab, but could just as easily suggest the White Whale that leads them, or the master of Fate and Mover of the whale, God-omnipotent. God consoles Starbuck, and, by conclusion, all men, with only infinite and unsympathetic silence.

When Ahab draws to his final end and gains closest and clearest sight of God, that is when he is most appalled and horrorstruck with what he sees. On the verge of the chase, Ahab almost collapses in loving and regretful emotion before Starbuck, as Ahab climactically exclaims: “let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God.” Ahab’s monomaniacal and hubristic clamoring for God has left him broken, because God’s impenetrable gaze levels everything in his soul. During the thunderstorm, the lighted rods of iron move Ahab to lambaste the essential, paradoxical ineffability and absurdity of God, describing God as “thy incommunicable riddle, thy unparticipated grief.” Ahab’s monologue declares God as nameless, unknowable, and ethereal even to God Himself. But this is a God whose hiddenness arises as a consequence of His deeper darkness: “thou dark Hindoo half
of nature, thou art an infidel, thou queen, and too truly speakest to me in the wide-slaughtering Typhoon, and the hushed burial of its after calm."¹⁹⁷ For a man like Ahab, the “problem of evil” is resolved not by affirming God’s goodness, but by accepting His inscrutable judgment and the unsettling feeling that brings.

Herbert keenly eyes our hidden feelings, for “few readers can sympathize with Ahab’s adversary, the white whale, and with the ultimate malignity [i.e., God] that whale has come to symbolize for Ahab.”¹⁹⁸ The God that Ahab finds as he approaches his end he wildly addresses thus: “What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it; what cozening, hidden lord and master, and cruel and remorseless emperor,” a God whom Ahab finds so inhuman as to move all things, even Ahab to his damnation.¹⁹⁹ Herbert expounds upon Ahab’s perspective: “Although he [Ahab] interprets the whale’s attack as an indication of the divine will, he takes it as a cosmic affront and determines to be revenged.”²⁰⁰ This God teeters on the edge of embodying “an actual cosmic evil which challenges the validity of Christian theology altogether.”²⁰¹ Herbert’s conclusion is that the God of *Moby-Dick*, though sharing much with Protestant theologians, surpasses them in the extreme presentation of God’s will and being, because it is not just the “cosmic affronts” but the Cosmic Affronter that Ahab seeks, and Ishmael, too, sees.

The most powerful analogy in *Moby-Dick* is that of the weaver-god, an enigmatic metaphor in need of particular exegesis. The analogy occurs when Ishmael encounters the Pagan islanders who have built a temple from a whale’s skeleton. Melville constructs an image of bizarre, pious terror that would stir any sensible man to shutter at the thought of such alien powers. In this metaphor it is important to understand the essential elements: the “earth beneath” is a “weaver’s loom” and “the great sun seemed a flying shuttle weaving the unwearied verdure.”²⁰² The loom is the earth, the sun the shuttle, and the weaver himself. “Oh, busy weaver! unseen weaver!” is God.

Ishmael first calls upon the weaver-god with a humble prayer: “pause!—one word!—” a simple request for the weaver to turn from the timeless work of his loom to address the mortal. “Whither flows the fabric?”, Ishmael, at this point in the novel, desperately asks, “[W]hither flows the fabric?... what palace may it deck wherefore all these ceaseless toilings?” —wondering the ultimate question of the ultimate being: “why?”²⁰³ “Speak, weaver!” Ishmael begs. “Stay they hand!—but one single word with thee!”, beseeching God to pause for a moment to care for His creations.²⁰⁴ But He does not: “the freshest-rushing carpet for ever slides away.”²⁰⁵ “The weaver-god,” which marks the first clear use of “god” in the analogy, “he weaves; and by that weaving he is deafened, that he hears no mortal voice.”²⁰⁶ It is God’s focus on eternity, on matters so beyond the small finitudes of man that deafens Him. The effect on man is that “by that humming, we, too, who look on the loom are deafened.” To see God’s work is so overpowering, so indicative of man’s unworthy puniness, that it deafens us to the mortal world as well. Only when we move beyond the loom, into the vision of God, can we hear the “thousand voices that speak through it.” Yet, these words are “inaudible among the flying spindles.” The man who looks upon the loom leaves earthly reality, stunned, deafened, and hypnotized by the ceaseless and immeasurably vast humming of the booming, constant, mechanical din of the universal factory, the very sound of the galactic cosmic shuttles that Ishmael hears. When awoken, he sees that the loom draws out the threads of every mortal man, who are the threads, and that the sounds are their screams that come from being woven. This is an awesome and awful God.

Ishmael’s analogy moves into the monstrous. The whale, “the great, white, worshiped skeleton lay lounging—a gigantic idler!”, is like that weaver-god Himself, for the whale is covered in the “ever-woven verdant warp and woof” that “hummed around him.”²⁰⁷ He is called “idler” because his movements appear still; they transcend the physical world and emphasize his
indifference and permanence. As Ishmael notes these details, the power of the skeleton awakens within him, for “the mighty idler seemed the cunning weaver”—the same idler as “gigantic idler.” Essential to using this metaphor to understand God is the recognition by Ishmael that it is just that—a metaphor—for he says that the whale-skeleton only “seemed” the weaver. This at last is what leads us to understand the Melvil- lian God. He is so distant, so incongruous, that to think of finding the true God by reasoned thought or love is, Melville frankly concludes, akin to imagining finding truth in looking at whale bones turned nightmarish Pagan idol. At the moment when we are closest, just about to transcend time and space to see His hands, His shuttles, to have our prayers answered by His own voice, God turns from his backside and issues forth the Revelation of His face: the dead whale, the “skeleton,” this “mystic” awful, Pagan “chapel,” with an “unextinguished” flame and hauntingly vibrating “lower jaw” of bone. God’s response to our yearning inquiries is to belie Himself as an abomination, “himself all woven over with the vines … but himself a skeleton. Life folded Death; Death trellised Life; the grim god wived with youthful Life.” God parodies our foolish approaches by showing us where our petty reason and distinctions carry us. We are sure, even, that as we look upon the skeleton of the whale it was not the sound of His shuttles that we heard, but His deep, resounding, eternal laughter at our terror. God’s face is a macabre mockery of holiness, both putrid death and perverted life, the hallowed and the desecrated. Melville’s God is not the Empyrean of Dante, or the wondrous coming dreams of Hamlet, but the Beelzebub of Golding. The whole time, too, that God shows man His mask, grinning from within at the horror of His own Revelation, His only occupation is to weave on.

The Pequod’s end is the last telling of God: “down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her … the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago.” Herbert argues that Ahab blasphemes because he “refuses to submit to the ‘inscrutable.’ Ahab seeks to know more than mortal man is permitted to learn of the infinite God.” The Pequod’s sin is pride, the sin first raised in the desire for knowledge. Ahab is an Icarus, a Babylonian, an Atlantian, an Adam, an Eve, a Lucifer, a Faust, an antediluvian, all who offended God not with their distance, but their proximity. In trying to come close to God, to grasp divinity in their own hands, each of them actually briefly held a slice. Adam ate the apple, Icarus ascended, and Faust got his promise. It was not really in seeking, but in actually holding a slice of divinity, that each of these men were utterly destroyed, crying desperately to have never been given the thing they asked for, too terrible to behold, too menacing to handle. Melville’s God, infallibly reasonable in His self, is in relation to man unmediated, unspoken, intangible, ineffable, and unutterable. The Lord of All stands in abject terror above an Earth eternally divided from Heaven, not out of blessedness, but omnipotence. It is this alienation that Ishmael sees, this horrible immutability, even to human suffering, that Ahab rages towards, and the essential and eternal resistance to contemplation that Melville emphasizes. One of Moby-Dick’s many ironies is that only Pip, the most meek and undirected on board, in falling overboard and drowning, himself communes in horror, death, and indifference in a final encounter with the great I AM:

[his soul drowned to] wondrous depths … Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent … So man’s insanity is heaven’s sense; and wandering from all mortal reason, man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason, is absurd and frantic; and weal or woe, feels then uncompromised, indifferent as his God.

Chris Mooney is a sophomore in the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences.
ne commonly seen and rather straightforward interpretation of The Picture of Dorian Gray circles around the "picture" itself. Since Dorian Gray’s portrait essentially becomes one of the main characters as the novel progresses, this is to be expected. It is prominent, it is dynamic, and through the persuasion caused simply by its existence, it guides Dorian towards his eventual destruction. Therefore, it makes sense to look at the portrait as both the herald of things to come and the reflection of Dorian’s soul and morality – or lack thereof. Is it, however, the only thing that both reflects Dorian’s inner self and foreshadows key turning points? This essay argues that the answer to that question is a resounding “no,” and it aims to show how the seemingly minor detail of the weather acts as an additional physical harbinger of morality in The Picture of Dorian Gray and why it does so.

“The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn.” Right from the opening line of The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde established a setting that fully engages the senses and therefore becomes very memorable and distinct. The focus on the floral scents and the light breeze invokes images of an idyllic, almost dream-like, summer day – the type of summer day one likes to remember from childhood. There seems to be something about days like these that calls to mind feelings of peace, harmony, and purity. These feelings similarly appear to surround Dorian Gray’s first appearance in the novel. Dorian himself does not make an entrance during this scene; we are instead introduced to him as a piece of art, from the perspective of a man who idolizes him, Basil Hallward. This technique is particularly telling because readers are experiencing Dorian from a distance, or rather, they are experiencing him as he was before becoming touched, influenced, and polluted by the other characters in the novel – by the novel itself. In this first encounter, all Dorian is to the reader is what can be gleaned from Basil and the portrait: a pure, handsome youth who is unblemished and untarnished by any of the scandals common to nineteenth-century life. However, dreams are but fleeting figments of the imagination, and things that are thought to be idyllic are often only illusory. Dorian Gray was no exception.

The key piece of evidence that, in Dorian Gray, the weather acts as a physical harbinger of morality lies within chapters twelve and thirteen, on the “ninth of November, the eve of [Dorian’s] thirty-eighth birthday.” By this point, readers have watched the illusion of the pure, idyllic Dorian crumble before their eyes. He has been polluted by the ideas of Lord Henry Wotton and, even after realizing the damage he was doing to his soul, made the conscious decision to continue down the path of depravity. This particular night, Dorian “was walking home about eleven o’clock from Lord Henry’s, where he had been
dining, and was wrapped in heavy furs, as the night was cold and foggy.”219 This is the first of five times that the word “fog” is mentioned in a span of eleven pages – four of which are contained within a mere two pages.

At some point during Dorian’s walk, he spots “a man [passing] him in the mist:” Basil Hallward.220 Wilde described Dorian’s reaction as a “strange sense of fear, for which he could not account.”221 Although Dorian makes a valiant attempt to ignore him, Basil spots him anyway and approaches. When he pushes Dorian for an excuse as to why he had not acknowledged him, the word “fog” makes its second appearance when Dorian says, “In this fog, my dear Basil? Why, I can’t even recognize Grosvenor Square. I believe my house is somewhere about here, but I don’t feel at all certain about it.”222 When the pair reaches Dorian’s house, Basil asks to come inside for a moment, and as Dorian acquiesces, the “fog” rears its head once again. Wilde first described “the lamp-light [struggling] out through the fog” as Dorian was ascending the steps and unlocking his door and then he had Dorian himself comment on its lurking presence as he told Basil, “Come in, or the fog will get into the house.”223 Once inside, the discussion-turned-argument that culminated in Basil’s murder ensues. As Dorian stood in the upper room after the horrific deed was done, “he felt strangely calm.”224 He walked to the window, “opened it, and stepped out onto the balcony. The wind had blown the fog away...”225

The fog is an oddly prevalent and recurring “character” in the aforementioned scene. It appears directly before Dorian Gray commits his worst crime (the murder of another by his own hand), and it dissipates directly after it was finished. Why? If one looks at the time period in which Wilde was writing, he or she will quickly discover that the term “pollution” was undergoing a dramatic transformation around this time, going “from spiritual or religious taint, to physical impurity, to distinctly ‘environmental’ contamination.”226 This transition was not easy. People were beginning to notice a disturbing change in nature (what we would today call environmental pollution), but they had no words for it and therefore had great difficulty describing it. For example, one can examine the lecture delivered by John Ruskin in 1884, entitled “The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century.” Ruskin tries to describe what people today call “smog” – “smoke-fog” – pollution in the air that is caused by humans and their inventions, such as factories and cars. However, he cannot quite seem to put his finger on this definition. Instead, he resorts to calling it such things as the “plague-wind” or “a dry black veil, which no ray of sunshine can pierce; partly diffused in mist, feeble mist, enough to make distant objects unintelligible, yet without any substance, or wreathing, or color of its own.”227

Defining the “plague-wind” (pollution) is not Ruskin’s only problem: he appears to have a great deal of trouble separating the new, environmental definition from the old, spiritual definition. In the last section of his lecture, Ruskin bases his criticism on the accusation that “for the last twenty years, England, and all foreign nations, either tempting her, or following her, have blasphemed the name of God deliberately and openly,” and claims that “of states in such moral gloom every seer of old predicted the physical gloom, saying, ‘The light shall be darkened in the heavens thereof, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.’”228 Instead of recognizing the physical and environmental causes for the smog overtaking London, he reverts to the common definition of the time and blames England’s religious failures for its current physical problems. In Ruskin’s thoughts, these two ideas of environmental and spiritual pollution are undeniably intertwined. This connection would explain the overwhelming presence of fog surrounding Basil’s murder scene in The Picture of Dorian Gray, since Wilde was writing during this same period of change and confusion. It is possible, then, that it made sense for Wilde – whether consciously or not – to include hallmarks of environmental pollution alongside his showcasing of particular instances of Dorian’s spiritual pollution.
Another example of the weather’s role in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* resides in chapter sixteen when Dorian made his trip to the opium den. Here, the weather seems to act both as a reflection of Dorian’s morality and as a portent of future events. On the one hand, Dorian’s act indicates that he has plunged further and further into moral disarray, and Wilde’s descriptions of the weather can be viewed as physical representations of this continued fall from grace. For example, the chapter opens by describing how “a cold rain began to fall, and the blurred street-lamps looked ghastly in the dripping mist.” Further down the page, the windows of the cart that Dorian is riding in are said to be “clogged with a grey-flannel mist.” On the other hand, these same passages could also be viewed as a forewarning of the events to come, since Dorian’s trip to the opium den is what sets off his troubles with James Vane, the brother of the woman whom Dorian was set to marry before he left her, causing her to take her own life. Since his sister’s death, James Vane had been looking for Dorian in order to avenge her, and this night in the opium den was where he first discovered Dorian’s identity, setting off the hunt that would last until his own death in chapter eighteen. Viewed in this manner, the depiction of the weather could be seen as indicating the strife that Dorian was about to endure.

The most fascinating phrase from this scene, regardless of which way a reader chooses to interpret its meaning, lies on page 176, where it is said that “from time to time a huge misshapen cloud stretched a long arm across and hid [the moon].” On November 13, 1880, a poem and cartoon, both entitled “Old King Coal’ and the Fog Demon,” were published in the British magazine *Punch*. The cartoon shows, among other things, a large hooded figure (referred to on page 220 as the “Smoke Demon”) emerging from the fog and stretching its arms out over the city of London. This is particularly interesting in light of the sentence at the top of the paragraph because it indicates that imagery of this sort was perhaps a recurring theme during the time period, or that it was at least something of which Wilde might have been aware, since *Punch* was one of the most widely read publications of the era. In the cartoon, the “demons” has a skull for a face and wings protruding from its back. This could read as an allusion to “the Angel of Death,” which would then be yet another indicator of an underlying tie between spirituality and environmental concerns.

When one reaches the final chapter of *Dorian Gray*, it quickly becomes apparent that a potential problem is lurking. The very first line starts with the phrase, “It was a lovely night.” If the weather is supposed to serve as an indicator for Dorian’s state of morality, for what is to come, or both, “lovely” does not quite seem to be what would be expected in this instance – particularly if one is convinced by the interpretation that has been used thus far in this essay. At first, this passage seems to challenge the entire argument for the interpretation. While admittedly still questionable and problematic, a potential reason makes it possible that “lovely” actually would be a fitting description of the weather at the start of the final chapter. In the prior, penultimate chapter, Dorian remarks to Lord Henry Wotton that he has decided that he is “going to be good,” and that he felt “a little changed already.” Although the final outcome is known to be much different – with Dorian realizing that instead of changing, he had done what he had been doing all along: experimenting with new feelings and emotions just for the sake of doing so – at this point, he honestly believed that he was changing for the better. In this light, the description of that fateful night being “lovely” makes sense because it can be read as the weather mirroring Dorian’s own beliefs that his morals were improving.

At first glance, the weather does not seem like an important focus when reading *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Other topics, such as the meaning of the portrait itself, appear to be much more central to one’s understanding of the novel. However, the weather (and more specifically, the presence, or lack of, fog) actually is important – both for the comprehension of the
novel and the implications for the time period as a whole. Wilde put into words something that was in flux during the time in which he was writing – the definition of the word “pollution.” Moreover, as one scholar puts it, a “key aspect to emphasize is that [the shift from spiritual to environmental pollution] was not specific to the idea of ‘pollution’ but rather part of a much broader evolution from a world understood in moral and spiritual terms to a world understood in material terms.”

Therefore, while honing in on the weather (and pollution) in The Picture of Dorian Gray allows readers to see, in a new way, Dorian’s fall into depravity and makes them aware of certain moments of foreshadowing, it also provides connections needed to grasp the broader changes happening in Wilde’s world.

Michelle K. Dailey is a sophomore in the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences studying English.
The matrimony of church and state would yield a massive collision in Western democracy. Compulsory belief bites personal freedom at its core, and yet state-sponsored religion has played a role in republics and representative governments since their conception. Niccolo Machiavelli salutes religion’s power to inspire the public’s fear and submission in his 16th century book Discourses on Livy, whereas 19th century author Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s challenges Machiavellian dependence on state-sponsored religion in an allegory called The Grand Inquisitor.

Machiavelli theorizes that a revival of the ancient Roman republic’s religion – idolatry of omnipotent gods – could piece together the 16th century Italy that had shattered under a corrupt Catholic Church. Machiavelli’s religious foundation serves as a platform for Dostoyevsky’s fictional state: Spain during the Grand Inquisition. Within his allegory, the atheist and later Christian Russian writer exposes internal moral weaknesses that hinder state-imposed religion. The two works debate whether religion’s by-products—security or freedom—can coexist in the formation of a secure state.

Machiavelli focuses on a ruler’s acquisition and maintenance of power in Discourses. He asserts that “the vast majority merely want to live in security,” and looks to the Roman republic as an example. Roman religion, a pagan fear of God, has proven most successful in breeding law-abiding citizens and thus producing a secure state, according to Machiavelli. Since Numa, the second ruler of the Roman republic, enforced religious piety “the citizens of Rome were a good deal more afraid of the consequences of breaking their oaths than of breaking the laws, for they were more afraid of God’s power than man’s.”

Machiavelli’s theory appears steady: state rulers who uphold state religion, even if they “personally judge it to be false,” will “inspire the populace to keep on the straight and narrow and to make criminals ashamed of themselves,” thereby providing security for the people.

Machiavelli attributes the fall of Rome to the leaders who failed to sustain their façades of religious observance, and the Roman failure serves as his model for the plight of 16th century Italy. When it was discovered that the leaders of the Roman church were speaking as instructed by the powerful, god-fearing men became skeptical and inclined to overthrow every good institution. Just as religious worship grounds the greatness of a republic, so neglect of respect for religion will bring about its ruin. Machiavelli thus concludes, “the wicked examples presented by the papal court have caused the whole of Italy to lose all piety and all religious devotion.”

Machiavelli’s narrative, in analyzing why the Florentine republic failed, amounts to a profound lament for lost virtues in Italy.

But where Machiavelli merely views the corruption of the Italian papacy as problematic for the maintenance of state security, Dostoyevsky goes further. In The Brothers Karamazov he claims that even if a state upholds the principles of its religion and succeeds in creating a secure populace, the state’s inherent purpose still fails. State-sponsored religion generates a lack of freedom and morality.

Machiavelli’s theory of religion in a state is illustrated in The Grand Inquisitor, a parable within Book 5 of The Brothers Karamazov narrative that “explores the possibilities of faith.” Dostoevsky pits the God-doubting Ivan Karamazov against his pious brother Alyosha. In a parable, Ivan sets Jesus Christ’s second coming in 16th century Seville – a Machiavellian theocracy.
enforced by the Catholic rulers Ferdinand and Isabella’s Grand Inquisition. The narrative begins with Christ performing miracles until discovered by the Cardinal Grand Inquisitor, who arrests Him and sentences Him to be burned at the stake for heresy. The Machiavellian Inquisitor visits Christ in prison, reprimanding His return because “for fifteen centuries [the church] has had to toil and suffer owing to that freedom that [He] brought.”

In a grand apologia, the Inquisitor exposes his understanding that freedom is pernicious for state security: “Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering.” Dostoyevsky’s personal response to Machiavellian statecraft might be seen in the reaction of Jesus, who kisses the Inquisitor on the lips and is silently released from the prison. The kiss secures Christ’s freedom both in the plot and in Dostoyevsky’s message: “the kiss represents the freedom to refuse the argument over power and tragic necessity” according to Dostoyevsky scholar Rowan Williams. In his “fictional picture of what faith and the lack of it would look like in the political and social world,” Dostoyevsky argues that “the credibility of faith is in its freedom to let itself be judged” by the populace who choose to follow God independently of any pressure from the state.

The Machiavellian strategy to maintain power fails because the church authority depends on the public’s obedience, which is contingent upon its faith. If God provides the moral authority required to ensure the security of the state, then can freedom of conscience exist within that state? And, most importantly, what is more valuable: freedom of consciousness or physical security?

Machiavelli’s political ethics reside in a moral vacuum. The rational approach to return glory to the Florentine state has little to do with the moral implications for the ordinary inhabitants. Dostoyevsky’s parable addresses the contradiction: religion is ethical because it has a set of values it aspires to realize—state-sponsored religion fails to acknowledge that religion stems from within personal choice to follow God. Thus, compulsory religion in a state would commit citizens to abandon independence, imploding security by its own internal tensions.

Dostoyevsky goes deeper than Machiavelli in recognizing that the ambiguity of faith clearly subjects it to doubt. Read against that logic, religion becomes a clearly unstable foundation for the greatness of a republic.

Yet despite his realization, Dostoyevsky comes to no conclusion of his own about the best role of religion in a state. The case of 16th century Spain, which prided itself on being the most devoutly Catholic country in Europe, represented an aberration of the core Christian virtues and values. The message to 19th century Russia might have been a warning against the Westernization of Russia.

Both Machiavelli and Dostoyevsky sought to avoid the internal political conflicts of their time periods, through idealization of religion in Machiavelli’s case, or considering its opening of doubt in Dostoyevsky’s. In Machiavelli’s construction, religion cannot provide freedom because it is forced upon citizens by the ruling authority. Religion can nominally provide security, but only so long as the populace remains constrained to the state’s perception of religion. In Dostoyevsky’s case, religion cannot serve as the foundation of security because it is too unstable. Faith for Dostoyevsky is ambiguous and therefore not absolute — a prerequisite for Machiavellian security. Thus, Dostoyevsky seems to say that a state-established religion undermines even the possibility of security because the two are incompatible.

How Western society approaches religion today still remains a question: should democratizing societies who’ve long practiced a common religion be exposed to America’s system of “choose your own religion?” Perhaps the passion of societies who traditionally impose faith on the populace grows out of the massive spiri-
tual bond among members. But the latest emergence of massacring conflict is difficult to reconcile with an undeniable spiritual bond. Whether the answer is finding faith from within or inheriting faith from birth, it is clear that the security of a state depends largely on citizens faithful in their leaders, a challenge for many Western societies of the 21st century.

Masha Goncharova is a sophomore in the Georgetown College of Arts & Sciences studying English and Social and Political Thought.
The seventy-seven years of the Philodemic after the turn of the century, taken as a whole, are a bit of a paradox. On the one hand, it was during these years that the Philodemic attained its highest levels of national game, consistently performing well at a high level of intercollegiate competition. National championships, best speaker awards, and long, unbeaten streaks were commonplace. But that success raises the obvious question, “If the Philodemic was doing so well for itself, why did it suddenly disappear and what caused the period of inactivity that was so damaging to the Society’s standing on campus?” Several answers are generally given. Some believe that the Philodemic Society hearkened back to an age of old white men that was no longer popular or that was actively opposed by the University. Some believe that the student body was not interested in academic debate. The first claim may have some truth to it; the second claim does not. In fact, right up until the Philodemic’s dissolution in 1977, it was very active and, by many standards, successful. The story is a confusing one, but it begins with the turn of the century.

The twentieth century began much as the nineteenth had ended. The Philodemic Society was the most prestigious group on campus and, by all accounts, it was successfully pursuing eloquence and defending liberty. In fact, a new version of the Constitution, approved by the society in 1901, began by defining the little group of friends, declaring, “This Society was first organized in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, and the fifty-fourth of the Independence of the United States. It is called the Philodemic Society of Georgetown College, and has for its primary object the cultivation of Truth, Eloquence, and Liberty.” These two sentences proclaim the same proud patriotism and goals that had characterized the Society for over seventy years. In fact, everything about the Society from this period suggests the idea of continuity.

For example, debate topics showed the same variety and philosophical depth that was found throughout the nineteenth century. In 1903, the Society debated, “Resolved: The character of Shylock as portrayed by Shakespeare is base and criminal, and his condemnation was just.” In 1910, two topics debated were “Resolved: John Brown deserves the title of hero,” and, “Resolved: That the work of the Editor-in-Chief of a College paper should count as one course towards his degree.” This varied selection shows that the Society was interested in literature questions, historical questions, and more pragmatic, everyday concerns.

Philodemecians will, perhaps, have some interest in the minor details of Society life. Meetings and debates did not exactly follow the current format of keynoters and floor speakers. Topics were not chosen at business meetings. Instead, at each regular meeting of the Society, the debaters would be chosen for three weeks in advance. The next week, those debaters selected and announced the topic they wanted to discuss. When
it came time for debate, before any speech was given, the president appointed a single member to serve as critic for that night. Each of the keynoters spoke for five to ten minutes and then gave their rebuttal for no more than three minutes. At this point, the critic gave his comments and the Society voted for the best keynoter or “regular debater” by secret ballot. This was to be followed by the floor debate or the “volunteer debate” which would last until everyone had said their share. Sometimes, the chancellor of the society (think: faculty advisor) offered his own critiques at the end, but his attendance was not expected at every meeting. This format is a little different than the modern practice but would not be a major adjustment for any Philodemecian today, or in 1839 for that matter.

The Society continued on like this for the next few decades while particular Philodemic traditions gained prominence. The first of these was the Merrick Debate which continued to attract crowds and star power. Judges included major generals, associate justices of the Supreme Court, senators, and many congressmen. Contrary to some reports, it was held on every single year until the Society’s dissolution. Keynoters for the debate were chosen by majority ballot at a regular meeting of the Society, two in the fall and two in the spring. Alongside this debate, the premier event of the year, grew the Hamilton Debate, named in honor of George Hamilton, Richard T. Merrick’s son-in-law, who donated the funds for the award’s endowment. It was to be given to the best extemporaneous speaker in the Society, though the term extemporaneous may need some defining. It is unclear whether the speakers were told the topic early on the morning of debate or the night before, but they certainly had some amount of time to prepare. There were six of them, chosen by majority ballot at a regular meeting of the Society, and the winner was decided by a panel of alumni judges.

One particular point of interest is the date of the Merrick debate. In the 1901 version of the Constitution, it is listed as February 22. In the 1911 version, it was February 22 “or as near there-to as possible.” At first, this may seem like an overture to George Washington’s birthday, and it very likely was. However, the old practice of specifically celebrating Washington’s Birthday had died away within the society and, in a way, the Merrick Debate was taking its place. The focus of the Philodemic’s most anticipated event of the year was no longer the nation’s founder but the oratorical abilities of its members. Taken in isolation, this change does not seem like much and probably would not warrant much interest, but this was just one of many changes coming to the Philodemic.

The Society itself moved on too, most notably with the arrival of Fr. John S. Toohey, SJ in 1911. He served as the Society’s moderator, coach, and mentor, until 1949, and under him, the Philodemic began to make its name known. Of course, intercollegiate debate was not unheard of before this time. Upon occasion, the Society debated the Enosinian Society at the George Washington University or some other school, perhaps once or twice during a school year. Under Toohey, the Philodemic became the debate team for Georgetown University, annually crushing the likes of Harvard, Yale, Penn, Boston College, and many others. Mostly these schools came from the East Coast, but not exclusively. A Society history from 1955 celebrates Toohey’s tenure. “During his term as moderator, he instilled a great love of eloquence and oratorical skill in Georgetown undergraduates. It was under his guidance that Georgetown went from 1921 to 1939 without suffering a single defeat...” The archives abound with newspaper clippings detailing the Society’s exploits. One clipping will announce the debate, another will announce the results, which are almost always the same: victory for Blue and Grey.

Alongside this growing intercollegiate dominance was a subtle change in topic selection. Philosophical and literature questions were disappearing as early as 1911 and being replaced by pure policy resolutions such as “Resolved: that the United States government should appoint federal registrars to supervise registration in those places where there is evidence of the
deliberate restriction of the right to vote. And be it further resolved: that the Congress include provisions for the protection of all citizens in their right to both register and vote. They were not all quite so specific, but the general trend was towards discussions of specific laws or treaties or policies that should or should not be undertaken by the Federal government. Literature, philosophy, and history all passed out of Philodemic discussion.

These two movements combined to transform the Philodemic Society. Minute books from the 1950s and 60s reveal a drastically different kind of meeting. Instead of each night being devoted to a particular resolution, the Society openly conversed on a topic such as foreign relations with China or the government of Spain. This was often accompanied by a guest speaker, an expert on the area. Then, at some point during the evening, someone proposed a resolution based on the topic of discussion. If the Society was talking about the role of the United Nations, a member might suggest, “Resolved: The United States should require the Soviet Union to pay its debts to the United Nations or lose its seat.” The Society then began discussing the merits of that resolution until it was either decided or they voted to adjourn. Meetings lasted anywhere from forty-five minutes to almost two hours. Due to the incomplete nature of our records, it is hard to tell when this new meeting format first took place. It probably was a long process, but it seems to have been completed between 1944 and the mid-1950s.

One particular meeting on October 11, 1963 revolved around whether or not Edward Kennedy should be elected to the United States Senate. Apparently, it was a pretty hot issue and several resolutions and counter resolutions were proposed. One side tried avoiding a vote on the resolution by voting for adjournment, calling for quorum, and using other tricks of parliamentary procedure. The recording secretary, who was a very understated writer, recorded that eventually, “the rival factions began to express their intellectual rivalry through physical manifestations, centered around the historic door at the entrance of the room.” The President called for adjournment and no vote was rendered.

But the format was not the only thing that had changed. Consider this description of the Philodemic and the Edward Campion Society from the early 1960s:

More than mere clubs for intercollegiate debaters, these organizations are first and foremost training grounds for Georgetown men who are interested in holding public office or in performing public service. Nowhere is this dominant purpose better exemplified than in the weekly meetings of the societies. Here, every effort is made to simulate “real life” public debates and discussions. Contemporary issues are probed and argued with all of the rough and ready vehemence and earnestness of a congressional debate. In this setting, where “no holds are barred,” the Georgetown man rapidly learns to prize and employ quick thinking, wit and eloquence. The Philodemic had always had three main goals, one of which was a means to the other two, and while that one, Eloquence, was still highly prized, there was now no mention of either Liberty or Truth. The primary purpose was, supposedly, self-improvement with the eventual aim of public service. That is certainly a noble goal (and one which many other literary societies at other colleges had held from their founding), but it marked a dramatic change from the first 130 years of Philodemic history.

The two men who did the most to shape the Philodemic over the next couple decades were Dr. William Reynolds and Mr. James Unger, the first serving as coach from 1960-1967, the latter from 1968-1983. Throughout the 1950s, intercollegiate debate had shifted away from the titanic struggles of school versus school premier events into tournament format. Instead of highly attended community affairs on the stage of Gaston Hall, debates became private affairs done before one to three judges. Style was less important as research and topical expertise came to the fore. The
Philodemic had kept up, but was not excelling. After Fr. Toohey, a series of temporary coaches came and went, none of them staying for longer than a couple years. In addition, the new School of Foreign Service had created their own Edward Campion Debate Society, splitting Georgetown’s oratorical abilities in two. But the two groups merged in 1960 and soon afterward Dr. Reynolds arrived on campus. The Philodemic began winning tournaments and even held its own Cherry Blossom Tournament for high school students, which eventually involved over 150 schools.

While all of this was going on, regular weekly meetings continued but took on a different, secondary nature. Some Philodemicians saw these meetings as training sessions for the “real” work of intercollegiate tournaments. This divide was heightened when James Unger came to Georgetown. Mr. Unger, who passed away in 2008, is considered by the policy debating community to have been the greatest debate coach of the 1970s. He came to Georgetown after receiving his J.D. at Harvard Law and immediately turned Georgetown into a debating powerhouse. In five different years from 1973 to 1980, one of Mr. Unger’s teams was ranked first in annual coaching polls. Georgetown excelled under Mr. Unger’s leadership and stood at the forefront of policy debate in America.

The observant reader will notice that one of Mr. Unger’s top teams, in 1980, competed three years after the demise of the Society itself. Throughout Georgetown’s rise to intercollegiate glory, a rift grew between the two aspects of Philodemic: weekly debate and policy tournaments. The former suffered especially from an aura of stuffiness and tradition that was unpopular on campus at the time. Other similar groups like the Georgetown Sodality, the college’s oldest student organization, also died out in that environment. When Philodemicians came back from summer break in 1977, they found that the President’s office was building cubicles in the Philodemic Room to fit the needs of its expanding staff. The move was widely detested on campus and several faculty members, including our friend Dr. John Glavin, protested. Eventually, the President’s office relented, but it was clear that the Philodemic Room was no longer an integral part of the school or its oldest secular student group.

The Society itself died off. Policy debate lived and thrived and sometimes continued to use the Philodemic name, but the organization as it had existed since 1830 was gone. It remained in this state for the next eleven years until an enterprising Georgetown student named Eric George had a passion to set things right.

It is hard to definitively identify the cause of the Philodemic’s downfall. What follows is simply this librarian’s analysis: the Philodemic fell victim to its own success. It rose to the very heights of intercollegiate debate and grew to championship caliber in whatever format it competed. But along the way, priorities shifted. Policy debate came to emphasize research and logical argumentation, fine things to be sure. But as generations of Philodemicians drew closer to that flame, they turned away from the issues of philosophy, religion, literature, and history that had animated Philodemicians in the past. There have been at least four possible definitions of the word Philodemic over the years, but the least plausible is one given during the Philodemic’s “Golden Age” when one reporter wrote that it meant, “Love of Eloquence.” That may have accurately and fully described the Society as it existed, but not as it was created.

Nor is this to say that Philodemicians from that period deserve blame or were in any way less dedicated than their predecessors. To some extent, the Philodemic belongs to its current members in any given year, and, as the interests of generations of students shifted, so too did the purpose of the Society. Nonetheless, this is one Philodemician who is glad to see a Society that so closely resembles its earlier roots and who finds comfort in the fact that Eloquence is once again subservient to Liberty.

Daniel Rendleman graduated from the George-town College of Arts & Sciences in 2009 with a Bachelor or Arts in History and Mathematics. He currently is a 1st Lieutenant in the United States 101st Airborne Division. This is the third part of a three-part history on the Philodemic Society.
Today we rightly celebrate our founder, John Carroll, scion of one of America’s most distinguished families. “Priest, patriot, prelate,” proclaims his Healy Circle’s statue’s pediment: first bishop and archbishop of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church in English America.

We rightly celebrate not only his initiative, drive, dedication, and sanctity, qualities all of us would do well to emulate; but also his vision in initiating what he called “this little academy upon the hilltop ‘ad ripas Potomaci,’” as our shield says, “on the banks of the Potomac ‘in Marylandia,’” as it then was in 1789. We honor and celebrate that vision of learning and erudition for young men of all Christian faiths: a vision of inclusiveness; a vision that embraced diversity under the standard of truth; a vision of community in the fragile pluralist experiment of American democracy.

Carroll’s plan was bold, especially for Catholicism, which in old-world Europe had long championed the principle of “cuius regio cuius religio” – that the religion of the monarch ought be the religion of the people. Indeed, the Church, together with the Counter-Reformation-inspired Jesuit order, made all attempts, both public and discreet, to make monarchs firmly Catholic and to convert those who were not. Carroll was a member of this same Jesuit order. He had spent his youth being educated in Europe at the Jesuit College of St. Omers in French Flanders. Moreover, he had spent his early adulthood teaching in the Society’s European schools. He was, as a result, well versed in the Church’s European policy concerning the union of religion and politics. The important question for us to consider thus becomes this: Where did Carroll get this new, daring, and courageous vision of a Catholicism, not only unthreatened by diverse religious views, but actually respectfully solicitous of them?

To answer this question, we need to retroject ourselves to the year 1689 when the first Carroll emigrated from Ireland and England to Maryland. In this year, as we will recall from the history books, transpired the so-called “Glorious” or “Bloodless Revolution” in Britain. The legitimately crowned king, James II of the House of Stuart, was deposed by a Protestant English Parliament because he was a Catholic: a politically indiscreet one, I hasten to add, but nonetheless duly anointed, as all British monarchs are, on the coronation chair, over the stone of Scone, in Westminster Abbey, by the Anglican archbishops of York and Canterbury. This so-called Glorious Revolution led to the even harsher enforcement in Britain, and in predominately Catholic Ireland, of the Penal Laws. Under these, those who refused to conform to the established Protestant Church of England – and this included not only Catholics, but Jews, Puritans, and Quakers – could not live in the vicinity of London; could not hold public office; could not serve in the learned professions; could not attend the universities; and were required to pay an extra heavy tax that, to add insult to injury, was used to support the established Church.

In light of these laws, is it any wonder that the Mayflower should sail for freedom of conscience in 1620; and that William Penn should settle the territory of our northern neighbor as a haven for the Quakers in 1682 – a haven granted
him, ironically, by the same deposed Catholic James II? Similarly, it is no wonder that the first American Carroll, known as Charles the Settler, should want to emigrate to the new world. But why, of all places, should he choose the small colony of Maryland, sandwiched between the much larger Penn’s Woods to the north and the vast and prosperous Virginia to the south?

To answer this question, we need to retroject ourselves three generations earlier to a cavalier named George Calvert, loyal and dedicated servant of King James I, also of the House of Stuart, successor to Elizabeth, the so-called Virgin Queen, and grandfather of the deposed James II. Calvert was a Protestant who converted to Catholicism at a time when Catholics in Britain not only had to pay extra taxes, but were also not infrequently publicly hanged, castrated, eviscerated, and deprived of their four limbs before being decapitated. Courageously exercising his conscience, Calvert developed the vision of founding a colony in the new world where not only his fellow Catholics but all Christians could live together in peace while practicing their faiths. King James acceded to his request and ceded to him the land that is now the state of Maryland. Named first and foremost in honor of Our Blessed Lady, on whose Annunciation’s feast day the settlers landed in 1633, it was also named in honor of Henrietta Maria, Queen of England, a French princess and herself a Catholic.

Let us then celebrate this great man, George Calvert, who was given the title of first Baron, or Lord, Baltimore. He is rightly deemed the author of the religious freedom that in the United States we hold so precious; that was so novel at the time of its initiation; and that has now become a world-recognized human right. Calvert must be counted among the great men of modern history: the first in the new world to separate religion from politics, and thus to enrich the American experience with a stark contrast to the earlier settlements of Massachusetts Bay and Virginia where, respectively, the Puritan and Anglican churches were by law established.

We are now in a position to grasp an overview of the concatenation of factors that make sense of the title of this address, “Georgetown and Maryland’s Catholic Vision.” Into a fruitful collision came the politics of established Europe, both Catholic and Protestant; the vision of an English Catholic convert; the courage of a Irish Catholic immigrant seeking freedom; the founding of America’s oldest Catholic university by one of his relatives; and Georgetown’s novel and distinctive vision. There is, however, more of the story to tell.

Before and after the Carrolls arrived in Maryland, good fortune was not always smiling. In order to settle the colony, to build homes and schools, to make the land prosper, and to develop trade with mother Britain, Lord Baltimore needed to attract settlers. The first to arrive on this day in 1633 were not all that many more than 100 persons. His attention was therefore drawn to the south bank of the James River in Virginia, near where Norfolk sits today, to a small colony of Puritans who had emigrated seeking a religious haven. The Royal Governor had imposed Anglican rituals on them, and they began to feel and rightly resent the same oppression of their native land that they had quitted.

About this same time, Lord Baltimore, together with the legislature he established, passed in 1649 the famous Act of Toleration. This permitted freedom of Christian worship. His Lordship even appointed a Protestant Governor of Maryland as a sign of his goodwill. He now invited these persecuted Puritans to live in Maryland. They came, setting themselves up along the Severn River where they built a community called Providence. It later became Annapolis, the capital of the colony. In addition, His Lordship also invited the Quakers who gathered in the same area. Today their relics lie in the Society of Friends’ cemetery near Galesville in Anne Arundel County. Personally, I confess much gratitude to Lord Baltimore, because my 8th, 9th, and 10th great-grandparents were Quakers of his settlement, buried, as we imagine, among its unmarked plots.
Alas, storm clouds had gathered in Mother England. The Puritans, who had come to dominate Parliament, raised up a “round-headed” leader known as Oliver Cromwell. A more dreaded figure in English history there cannot be, except for King Henry VIII, who savaged the monasteries, and beheaded St. Thomas More, of whom Dr. Johnson has said: “He was the man of the most excellent virtue these isles have e’er produced.” Seizing their own opportunity, the Puritans of Maryland’s Providence, under the leadership, it pains me to say, of my 11th great-grandfather, Major Richard Ewen, took the government of Maryland by force from Lord Baltimore. They then promptly rescinded the Act of Toleration, the very document under whose beneficence they had come in the first place. Catholics were now forbidden to worship, and Father Andrew White, the Jesuit who had come with the first settlers, who had celebrated the first Mass in Maryland, and who had labored tirelessly, amid much sacrifice, among the native Americans of Maryland, was forcibly returned to England in chains, to be tried as a traitor. We can sense the fragility of Lord Baltimore’s vision of religious toleration, which confirms his fortitude and prescience all the more. Nonetheless, for all his legion of faults, I am happy to say that Cromwell respected the authority of His Lordship and required the Puritans to surrender the government to its legitimate head. The Act of Toleration was reintroduced, but it would not survive for much longer.

Let us return to the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1689 that deposed the Catholic James II. Now it was the Anglicans’ turn to deprive Lord Baltimore of his government. This they did, under the pretext of loyalty to the new monarchs, William of Orange and Mary Stuart. Again it pains me to say that instrumental in this perfidy was my 10th great-grandfather, Colonel Edward Dorsey who, although a supporter in private of the Jacobite cause, knew which side of the political bread that he needed self-advantageously to butter. (In testimony of his public allegiance, he gave 2000 pounds of tobacco to found a school in Annapolis named in honor of King William. Its great books program and annual croquet match with the Naval Academy are still thriving today under the name of St. John’s College.) The Anglican Church became by law established in Maryland. Once again, Catholics were forbidden to worship in public, could not serve in the learned professions, could not be educated except at home or go abroad, as the young John Carroll did. And they were forced to pay the heavy tax. All this occurred here in lovely Maryland, where the pain of this discrimination continued unabated from 1689 until the American Revolution in 1776.

Now, good friends, on this great feast of the Incarnation of our Lord, also known as the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, we have steeped our moral imaginations in the political and religious scenarios that sculpted Georgetown’s Founder’s vision. This dissociated truth from forced conformity and united it with tolerance, diversity, pluralism, and community. The Carrolls had sought a haven for conscience in Lord Baltimore’s Maryland. It had been stripped away once and restored, only to be stripped away again, until the yoke of the British monarch was once and for all thrust off the necks of the freedom-seeking peoples of the new world. This was accomplished by high-minded men, who pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to sign a “Declaration” that shines even today as a beacon throughout the world. Among these men was our Founder’s cousin, Charles Carroll of Carrollton who, I am proud to say, is also my own cousin. The only Catholic to appear among the signers, he, like all the Carrolls, and like all the Catholics and Quakers of colonial Maryland, had endured social, economic, and political prejudice on account of their convictions.

Although these heroes risked all to bring injustice to an end, the depth of their virtue lay precisely in this. Unlike my 11th great-grandfather and his Puritan ilk, the Carrolls and their fellows, through thick and thin, never abandoned the original vision of Lord Baltimore.
They never sought vengeance on those who oppressed them because of political advantage. They never schemed, when they enjoyed political advantage, to reunite politics to their own religion. They never disparaged toleration in the name of their own truth, however much they believed it, adhered to it, practiced it, held it dear, and sacrificed greatly for it. This then is the virtue, the vision, the courage, the inspiration that imbued our Founder’s founding of our “little academy on the banks of the Potomac.” May we, its heirs, keep it, and hand it on to others alive and well.

Stephen M. Fields, S.J., is a Georgetown University Associate Professor of Theology. This article is adapted from an address delivered on Founder’s Day, March 25, 2011, in Copley Formal Lounge.
As Georgetown University launches a massive capital campaign (“For Generations to Come: The Campaign for Georgetown”) seeking to raise $1.5 billion, I believe that it is important to examine what would make Georgetown a greater university than it already is. Determining what criteria determine the greatness of a university, and Georgetown in particular, is an important exercise and a topic on which well-meaning people can disagree.

There are, of course, a variety of metrics to gauge and measure any university or college. Many people want to examine inputs. One input might be the academic success of incoming first year students, such as their ACT or SAT scores and grade point averages. Others measure universities by the quality of their faculty. This is typically done by reviewing the faculty in terms of grants and published research, not pedagogy.

There are also those that would look at outputs. These might include how students are doing in terms of finding a job some number of months after graduation. Another factor might consider how many alumni advance to graduate school, taking into account the quality and ranking of the graduate school. These people might also examine the average salary of Georgetown graduates and suggested lifetime earnings.

All of these metrics have validity and are useful to examine, but there has to be a broader and more holistic understanding of what it means to be “a great University.” This encompasses more than numerical inputs and outputs. It has to include the non-quantitative elements of tradition, history, mission, and the non-quantifiable quality of the people comprising and graduating from the University.

Georgetown’s rich history and traditions, sadly neglected or not known by most current students and administrators, is peerless. Georgetown University traces its roots to 1634 when, as J. Fairfax McLaughlin wrote in “College Days at Georgetown and Other Papers:”

The cradle of Georgetown University was the Indian school taught by Father Andrew White, S.J., at St. Mary’s City, in 1634, several years before the founding of Harvard by the Puritans. This was the year of the landing of the Ark and the Dove at St. Mary’s under Leonard Calvert, brother of Cecilius, the second Lord Baltimore. Father White, founder of a new spiritual empire in this country, out of which has grown the Catholic Church in the United States, planted the first seeds of the present flourishing institution at Georgetown when he translated in the Indian tongue a grammar, dictionary, and catechism for use among his neophytes of the Yaocomoco tribe of St. Mary’s. He not only taught and converted Indians, but he tells us in his “Relatio Itineris” that in addition to hundreds of the natives, nearly all the Protestants who had come out in the first expedition, as well as some settlers from Virginia who found their way across the Potomac to St. Mary’s, were converted to the Catholic faith.

Father John Carroll laid out his goal for “George-Town” as a “SEMINARY” where Catholics and non-Catholics could receive education. As Father Carroll wrote:
PROPOSALS FOR ESTABLISHING AN ACADEMY AT GEORGE-TOWN PATOWMACK-RIVER, MARYLAND (1787)

The Object of the proposed Institution is, to unite the Means of communicating Science with an effectual provision for guarding and improving the Morals of Youth. With this View, the SEMINARY will be superintended by those, who, having had Experience in similar Institutions, know that an undivided Attention may be given to the Cultivation of Virtue, and literary Improvement; and that a System of Discipline may be introduced and preserved, incompatible with Indolence and Inattention in the Professor, or with incorrigible Habits of Immorality in the Student…

Agreeably to the liberal Principle of our Constitution, the Seminary will be open to Students of Every religious Profession. They, who, in this Respect, differ from the Superintendent of the Academy, will be at Liberty to frequent the places of Worship and Instruction appointed by their Parents; but with respect to their moral Conduct, all must be subject to general and uniform Discipline…

Gaston Hall reflects the mission of Georgetown in that the highest words on both East and West sides of the hall state “Wisdom” and “Virtue.” These are the qualities that should be promoted and evaluated in students, professors, administrators, and staff.

We live in a world where people can achieve greatness despite not being great people. There are geniuses today and throughout history that have had significant personal flaws and committed grave sins, yet have done great things. Georgetown has produced some of these people. However, Georgetown must seek to produce great men and women who do great things. These are the people who will be leaders in their family, their communities, their country, and the world.

As President Theodore Roosevelt said in his commencement address to Georgetown’s Class of 1906: “No institution of learning should fail to make its pupils understand that their conduct under the strain and stress of life is the measure of their success in applying the ideals that have been held up to them. Of course it is unnecessary to say that you who graduate from an institution such as this bear a peculiarly heavy burden of moral obligation. To you much has been given. You enter life with privileges denied to most of your fellows; and therefore we have a right to expect from you a peculiar measure of service to society, to the state, in return.” This is the call for every Georgetown man and woman. It is a call for those at a great university who want to be great men and women.

Eric Wind is a 2009 graduate of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and former Editor-in-Chief of Utraque Unum.
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On Dante, Individual Freedom of Responsibility, and the Importance of “Contemplative Leisure”
A Conversation with Francis Ambrosio

Javier Pena

This year marks three decades of teaching at Georgetown University for philosophy Professor Francis Ambrosio. On talking to him about the time since passed, the changes in our world and the role that a liberal arts education should play in it, it is easy to see how Francis Ambrosio came to be recognized with various teaching awards. These include the Bunn Award for Faculty Excellence (1998), the Dean’s Award for Teaching (2000), and, most recently, the Dorothy Brown Award for Outstanding Teaching Achievement (2009), given by the student body to the faculty member who has had the strongest impact on students’ university experience. So what is the content of this impact that he has made, and what does it teach us about the role that the liberal arts can and should play during this unique and irreplaceable time of our lives?

For Ambrosio, an institution faithful in its commitment to the liberal arts will helps students create a space for what he calls “contemplative leisure.” A far cry from the “leisure” time that many students use to play videogames, browse their friends’ Facebook pages, or entertain themselves in any number of inane ways, this type of leisure makes room for the thoughtful consideration of nothing less than those questions which get at the meaning of this life and our particular place in it.

The cultivation of such a contemplative attitude is an important element in Ambrosio’s class, entitled “Dante and the Christian Imagination,” as demonstrated by his repeated, and insistent, exhortations to students to engage with the Divine Comedy at the level of contemplative reading. And it is at this point where Ambrosio meets his students where they are, namely by bringing the poem’s experience into our technology-saturated world. Using his widely recognized, interactive educational website, MyDante, he provides students the opportunity to access the poem and enhance their experience of it in a manner much like that used by Middle Age monks with their illuminated manuscripts—and even greater than the monks could have imagined, as the website allows the engaged reader to post images and sound files of his own choosing at any point in the poem. So rather than bemoan the increasing prevalence of technology, which he admits is capable of being “seriously intrusive in our contemplative life,” he recognizes its many possibilities for helping our contemplative education, which in responding to technology as part of our everyday reality, has to be concerned with “how to use [technology] effectively, how to use it humanely.” Thus for Ambrosio listening to Mozart while reading of Dante’s momentous meeting with his beloved Beatrice is “something that opens up your heart, and mind, and senses –
it's a bridge, it helps you go from where you are
to where you would like to arrive.”

As a frequent e-mail checker and Internet
multi-tasker, I could appreciate this desire to
integrate technology into the learning experi-
ence. However, being intimately familiar with
these temptations which tend to interrupt and
lessen the quality of work requiring concentra-
tion, I thought to myself: isn’t the required use
of such technologies effectively setting me up
for failure? I suggested this to Ambrosio, and,
true to form of a man who has devoted a sig-
nificant part of his life’s work and intellectual
energy to the study of Dante and the Comedy’s
rich illustrations of themes such as individual
freedom of choice and moral responsibility, he
answered that this seemingly mundane dilem-
ma (to check or not check my inbox for the tenth
time) involves nothing less than my freedom of
responsibility, which is an essential part of the
contemplative way of life. Indeed, it is because
we have a real freedom as conscious, reasoning
beings, that it is ultimately incumbent upon each
one of us to take personal responsibility for pur-
suing such a way of life and giving a deliberate
and thoughtful response to the cosmic questions
that confront us again and again. So if the stu-
dent does not take personal responsibility in this
area, there is not much an institution can do to
change that, regardless of its commitment to the
liberal arts tradition. Nonetheless, as Ambrosio
rightly commented, an educational institution
like Georgetown can make a significant differ-
ce by creating an “atmosphere that supports
and sustains” that pursuit of, or space for, con-
templative leisure.

We thus have a question of where the indi-
vidual student’s responsibility ends and where
the university’s begins. And while the last thing
we should do is add to those who in some way or
another want to encourage a shifting of respon-
sibility for personal development away from the
students and to their parents, or their teachers,
or society at large, one can argue that the univer-
sity, especially one with the influence and global
draw of Georgetown, has more responsibility
today to facilitate and encourage these endeav-
ors. The reason for this is illustrated in Professor
Ambrosio’s response to my first question about
what has changed the most at Georgetown since
1981. He answered that it was not so much the
students that have changed – he doesn’t think
“people change much” – but the “atmosphere,”
the world we live in, which in turn affects all of
us, hindering our ability to pursue genuinely lib-
eral learning. In general, said Ambrosio, it seems
that we are today more aware of the “limited-
ness of resources” – including energy sources,
housing, jobs – and therefore have a heightened
sense of competition.

This is manifested in undergraduate educa-
tion’s greater emphasis on career preparation,
specialization of students’ academic tracks, and
in students’ and parents’ increasing concern
with “practicality” as the end of their educa-
tional efforts. These characteristics are part of
what Ambrosio finds most frustrating about
Georgetown – he’ll quickly tell you that it’s not
the students themselves – a “lack of courage to
discover its own unique identity and to be that,
as opposed to being torn toward following dif-
ferent models, trying to be too many things to
too many people, trying to do, in a sense, some-
thing other than what it is capable of.” (Ambro-
sio offered the term “student-oriented research
university” as a clear example of this). He will
also be quick to recognize that it is easy to criti-
cize the institution, so the important thing is not
to “judge success or failure,” but to be aware of
the problems and be as realistic and effective as
possible in using the limited resources (namely,
our relatively small endowment) at our disposal.

The fact that our years as undergraduates
are a unique time period in our lives makes this
need all the more urgent. There is not going to
be another time later in life when we get to have
this same experience again, so this has important
implications for us now. And here Dante, with
his poem of heaven and hell, life and death, can
instruct us yet again. When Ambrosio explained
to me that one of Dante’s most important points
of access for the non-Christian or non-religious
person is what it says about the ultimately mysterious relationship between life and death – namely, that we can look at it with hope (Dante responds to the real death of Beatrice with her resurrection and placement in the Paradiso), I posed the hypothetical scenario of a student coming away from the course reaffirmed in his commitment to reincarnation, and the hope of “trying again” that is implied in such a concept. Sure, Ambrosio said, this notion is relevant to the Comedy for its likeness to the concept of purgatory, of having “another chance” at doing or completing the things we did not do in our life.

What is different, and arguably more in line with our human experience, about Dante’s Christian conception of this notion, is the unique, and eternal, importance assigned to our given human identity; in a strict sense, we really only get one shot at this life with those particular faculties and circumstances we have been given. Similarly, the unique opportunity over the course of everyday actions to liberally choose our identity – and thus the kind of person that we want to become – while wrestling with those ultimate questions of life, can never truly be repeated. So let us use the limited resources we’ve been given – and these four formational years on the Hilltop – as realistically and effectively as we can muster the courage to do so.

Javier Pena is a senior in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service studying International Politics.
Endnotes


6 Ibid., 144.


10 Lewis, 32.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 36. Emphasis added.

13 Ibid., 35.

14 Lewis, 33.

15 Of course, the kind of diversity that Winthrop was referring to is markedly different than the implications associated with contemporary uses of the word. Though Winthrop did not mean plurality of race or religious views, he nevertheless governed a community in which there were great inequities of wealth, strength, skill, and education.


17 Tocqueville, 484.


19 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: First Series* “Self-Reliance” (BiblioBazaar) 2008, 31-56. Emerson first began speaking of the philosophy that would become “Self-Reliance” in a speech he delivered in 1830. The completed essay was first published in 1841 in a compilation of his works entitled *Essays: First Series*.

20 Tocqueville. 492.

21 Ibid., 486.

22 Ibid., 491.

24 Putnam, 71.
25 Ibid., 75.
26 Nisbet, Quest, 45.
27 Nisbet, The Present Age, 87.
28 Nisbet, Quest, 47.
29 Ibid., 43.
30 Tocqueville, 483. Emphasis added.
31 Nisbet, 230.
33 Nisbet, 43.
34 Ibid., 45.
35 Plato, The Republic, trans. Allan David Bloom (USA, 1968), Book II 368e.
36 Ibid., Book VII 526b.
37 Ibid., Book VII 525d.
38 Ibid., Book VII 520c.
39 Ibid., Book VII 520c.
40 Ibid., Book VII 517a.
41 Ibid., Book VII 517d.
44 Ibid.
46 Simone Weil, “Human Personality,” o cit., 51.
48 Ibid., 1267b3-4.
49 Simone Weil, “The Iliad or the Poem of Force,” o cit., 163.
50 Ibid., 179.
52 Simone Weil, “Human Personality,” o cit., 51.
55 Alexis de Tocqueville, o cit., 97.
Like Marx in his more lucid moments, Weil is troubled by the dehumanization of labor that arises from using money as a medium of exchange and for this reason is reluctant to endorse a need for a certain percentage of one’s profits. In lieu of that, she defines personal property solely within the context of certain essential objects like a house, clothing, books, etc. While she rightly perceives the tendency to consumerism that arises from the free market, the spirit of her theory of obligations demands some protection of individual initiative equivalent to a right to enjoy the fruits of one’s labor. For our society that means putting a limit on the percentage of an individual’s income the state can justifiably take through taxation, even if that limit is defined only in relation to the degree of taxation experienced by other members of society. Anything less opens the door for exploitive taxation.


Simone Weil, The Need for Roots, o cit., 3.

Aristotle, o cit., 1253a1-3.


Augustine, The City of God, Book IV, Chapter 4.


Hobbes, 76.

Plato, 255ff.


Ibid., 516.

Ibid., 691.

Ibid., 692.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., 239.

Ibid., 274.

Ibid., 515.

Ibid., 236.

Ibid., 517.

Ibid., 511.

Kathryn Olesko, various lectures (The Atomic Age, Georgetown University, Washington DC, Spring 2011).


87 Ibid.


90 Ibid.

91 Ibid., 263-264


93 Ibid., 6

94 Ibid., 10.

95 Members of this organization were well-respected thinkers in the Catholic Church. While there is no evidence that the wider Church disagreed with their report, it is important to note that this was not a statement from the Vatican. This statement’s inclusion in this paper is only to establish the existence of Catholic objections to the bomb.


97 Ibid.


99 Ibid.

100 Ibid., 6.

101 Ibid., 55.


109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
119 Neely, 4.
123 Neely, 9.
128 Article I, Section 9, clause a states “The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety may require it.”
130 Lincoln, *Proclamation Speech.*

131 Ibid., 430-31.

132 “Habeas Corpus and Chief Justice Taney-- His Opinions About Rebellion in 1843 and in 1861” The *New York Herald*, Jun 9, 1861.


135 Neely 234.


142 Neely 51-60.


156 In reading Justice Douglas’s opinion, he seems to insinuate that American liberalism is identified with non-sectarianism.

159 Ibid., 680-682.
160 “Authority, not truth, makes the word,” a paraphrase of Hobbes’s dictum *au-toritas, non veritas facit legem*, authority, not truth, makes the law.
161 See for instance *Lynch*, 697.
162 Ibid., 697-700.
163 The Christmas Tree is sufficiently “secular” to Brennan. See *Lynch*, 668, 700.
164 Matthew 12:17.
170 Ibid., 119.
174 Ibid., 140.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
178 Melville, 216.
179 Ibid., 220.
180 Ibid., 219.
181 Ibid.
182 Ibid., 217.
183 Ibid., 378.
184 Ibid., 218.
185 Ibid., 217.
186 Ibid., 296.
187 Ibid.
188 Ibid., 373.
190  Melville, 419.
191  Ibid., 418.
192  Ibid., 140.
193  Ibid., 413.
194  Ibid., 418.
195  Ibid., 406.
196  Ibid., 383.
197  Ibid., 376.
198  Herbert, 1619.
199  Melville, 406.
200  Herbert, 1613.
201  Ibid., 1619.
202  Melville, 345.
203  Ibid.
204  Ibid.
205  Ibid.
206  Ibid.
207  Ibid.
208  Cf. Exodus 33: 20, 23.
209  Melville, 345.
210  Ibid., 346.
212  Melville, 345.
213  Ibid., 345.
214  Ibid., 427.
215  Herbert, 1618.
216  Melville, 321-322.
218  Ibid., 141.
219  Ibid.
220  Ibid.
221  Ibid.
222  Ibid.
223  Ibid., 142.
224  Ibid., 152.
225  Ibid.
228  Ibid., 22.
229  Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 176.
230  Ibid.
231  Ibid.
235  Ibid., 207.
238  Ibid., 114.
239  Ibid., 114-117.
240  Ibid., 115.
243  Ibid., 21.
244  Williams, 31.
245  Ibid., 10.
246  Philodemic Constitution, Philodemic Archives, Box 8, Folder 2.
247  Box 8, Folder 1.
248  Box 8, Folder 1.
249  1911 Constitution.
250  Box 11, Folder 5, Merrick Program.
251  Box 8, Folder 3 Constitution.
252  Box 10, Folder 2, *Debating at Georgetown*.
253  Box 11, Folder 8, Mar 8, 1965.
254  Box 10, Various Minute Books.
255  Box 11, Folder 7.
256  The Edward Campion Society was the School of Foreign Service’s Philodemic counterpart.
257  Box 11, Folder 1.
259  Jordan Nardino, e-mail.